The Poetical Works of Robert Burns

THE AFTON BURNS

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ROBERT BURNS

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"An' monie lads' and lasses' fates
Are there that night decided."
—HALLOWEEN.

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The Poetical Works of
ROBERT BURNS

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CLAUDE A. SHEPPERSON

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PREFACE

In these volumes the poetical works of Burns are presented in their due chronological sequence, the pieces following each other according to the dates of their composition—so far as ascertainable—so that the development of the poet's genius may be readily studied in connection with the facts of his life, as given in the biographical memoir contained in the first volume. As will be noticed, the year of the poet's age to which each poem belongs is inserted at the top of the page where the piece occurs. Numerous notes are appended to the author's text, giving the reader a vast amount of useful, and indeed indispensable, information in regard to the origin of the individual poems, and to persons, places, occurrences, local usages, &c., connected with or referred to by Burns. Without such a commentary many references and allusions would not be understood, nor would the several pieces possess anything like the same interest. A certain number of the notes are critical in their character—they may point out special beauties, or may indicate where the poet has been less happy in his efforts. These notes are chiefly selected from writers of eminence who have had Burns for their theme—such as, Scott, Wordsworth, Lockhart, Professor Wilson, Allan Cunnningham, and Carlyle, not to mention others.

For the convenience of the reader, and to save him time and trouble, the distinctively Scottish words and expressions, such as occur especially in the best and most characteristic of Burns's poems, have their meanings made clear by marginal explanations accompanying each piece that requires such aid. To those unacquainted with the dialect that Burns often used this must prove a most valuable feature, as it will enable anyone readily to understand the meaning of even the most difficult passages, while the troublesome necessity of consulting a special glossary is entirely avoided. In the margin and opposite each line will be found the necessary interpretation, so that the reader carries the sense along with him as he reads, and only very rarely does a more detailed explanation require to be furnished in a footnote. But it may be pointed out that the difficulty of understanding Burns is apt to be exaggerated, and that many of his poems present few and trifling peculiarities of dialect and others none at all.

The Sketch of the Poet's Life has been specially written for this edition. The information given in it has naturally been obtained chiefly from works

long recognized as standard authorities on the poet's life; but other sources have also been made use of, some of them available only since comparatively recent times. The writer's aim has been to provide a fairly full and fairly readable biography, one in which the treatment is matter-of-fact rather than idealistic or indiscriminately eulogistic, and in which, while the poet's greatness is fully recognized, his defects or failings are not ignored. All the main facts and circumstances pertaining to the poet's career are set forth, it is believed, in their proper relations and connection, and the wish has been—so far as space permitted—to make him appear as he really was, as we have him depicted to us by contemporaries, and more especially as he shows himself to us through his poems and the frank revelations of his own letters.

In the last volume all Burns's songs that are in the way of being sung, with a number that are very seldom sung, are printed along with the airs with which they are usually associated—these songs being also given with the necessary annotations in their proper places in the other volumes. The melodies are harmonized for the voice and piano, and the qualifications of a skilled musician being here required, this volume was entrusted to the care of one whose position in the musical world is a warrant of thorough competence for the task committed to him. More detailed reference to the music will be found in the prefatory note to the fourth volume.

The Illustrations may also be referred to, as having a character and distinction of their own. They are from the pencil of a well-known artist, who made a special visit to the Burns country in order to secure that the scenic features depicted by him should be true to fact, and that all his drawings should possess the local colour demanded by the poetic pieces with which they are associated.

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Are there that night decided."—HALLOWEEN.
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ROBERT BURNS

After Portrait by Skirving now in the possession of Sir Theodore Martin

Robert Burns.

After Portrait by Skirving now in the possession of Sir Theodore Martin.

ROBERT BURNS

SKETCH OF THE POET'S LIFE

BY CHARLES ANNANDALE, M.A., LL.D.

Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet, was born on the 25th of January, 1759, the last year but one of George II's reign, the date being more picturesquely given by the poet himself in one of his best-known songs as that on which "Rantin' rovin' Robin" was ushered into the world to the accompaniment of "a blast of Janwar' win'", when "our Monarch's hindmost year but ane was five-and-twenty days begun". The year, as may be recollected, was that of the fall of Quebec and the death of Wolfe in the moment of victory. Next year George the Third was king, and eleven years later Scotland gave to the world another great man of genius, namely Walter Scott. Burns and he were contemporaries for about twenty-five years, but the two met only once in their lives. The scene of the poet's birth was a clay-built cottage in Ayrshire, standing about two miles to the south of the town of Ayr, and not far from the right bank of the River Doon, on the road that a little farther onwards is carried across the river by the Auld Brig. The humble one-story, two-roomed thatched cottage still exists, and is the goal of pilgrims from many parts of the world. It was built wholly or mainly by the poet's father himself, and was a fairly comfortable abode. However, had it not been taken under special protection, latterly that of a public body, probably little or nothing of it would have remained till our days. It is now easily reached

from Ayr by electric tramway, and connected with it there is an interesting collection of Burns relics. Two other objects of interest here are the far-famed but roofless and ruinous Alloway Kirk and a handsome monument to Burns. The scenery of the locality possesses such picturesque attractions as one is apt to associate with a poet's birthplace.

On the paternal side Burns was of north-country extraction and belonged to a race of farmers, his father, William Burness or Burnes—for such were earlier spellings of the name—being son of a Kincardineshire farmer who was tenant of Clochnahill, south-west of Stonehaven. William Burness had been bred a gardener, and when about twenty-seven years of age (apparently in 1748) had left his native district to seek his fortune farther south. This quest had brought him first to Edinburgh, and then to Ayrshire, where at the time of his son's birth he was gardener and overseer to Mr. Ferguson of Doonholm, the proprietor of a small estate, being also occupant of a croft or holding of some 7 acres. Here he had put up for his abode the cot above-mentioned, and in 1757 had brought to it as his wife Agnes Brown, an Ayrshire farmer's daughter, who became mother of the poet and of six younger children. William Burness, who had received the ordinary education given in the country schools of his day, was a man of high character, and of more than average intelligence, sense, and knowledge of men; but according to the poet his "stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility" had been obstacles to his success in life. In other accounts of him irascibility is not mentioned as a failing of his; he is described as a tender and affectionate father and husband, well liked by those in his employment, and, as a man, held in general esteem. He was undoubtedly the original of "the saint, the father, and the husband", depicted in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, while he is similarly characterized in the poetic epitaph written for him by his son. Religion was a strong point with him, and for the instruction of his children he got an exposition of his own somewhat anti-Calvinistic doctrinal views or beliefs drawn up in writing in the form of a dialogue between a father and son. Still extant scraps of letters in his handwriting are somewhat defective both in spelling and composition, and indicate that he had no great command of the pen.

Of Burns's mother we learn very little from the poet himself, but otherwise we learn that mentally she was not specially gifted; that though she could read her Bible she never learned to write; that she made use of many quaint old saws or sayings, and had a never-failing store of old ballads, songs, and traditionary tales; and that she was absolutely devoted to her husband, and was unwearied in her attention to the duties of a mother. Intellectually it would appear that the poet inherited more from his father than from his mother, and from him came also a good deal of his early education.

Of his very early years we know little. No doubt, as suggested by *Auld Lang Syne*, he ran about his native braes, paddled in the burn, and gathered daisies like other children; but perhaps the "enthusiastic idiot-piety" by which he says he was inspired in childhood made him less fond of pranks and mischief than many boys; and the thoughtless lightheartedness of boyhood might also be kept in check by the constant poverty that weighed on the household. "The latent seeds of poesy", we learn from Burns himself, were cultivated by eerie tales of ghosts, demons, magic, and the supernatural generally, that an old servant maid poured into his ears—leaving an effect on his imagination that had never quite worn off. The first piece of literature that he remembered taking pleasure in was Addison's *Vision of Mirza*, met with in a schoolbook.

Burns got no great amount of actual schooling, and although the parish or public-school system of education was then well established in Scotland, he seems to have been but little benefited by it. The parish school of Ayr would naturally be in the town of Ayr; but in his sixth year the young poet was sent to a small school at Alloway Mill, about a mile from his home. After this he and his next younger brother Gilbert received instruction from a young man named John Murdoch, who was engaged by William Burness and several of his neighbours to teach their children, the teacher receiving a small salary and being lodged by turns with the parents of his pupils. The school was a very small building close by the Burns cottage. Burns's father in this matter was following the lead of his own father, who had made the like provision for the education of his children at Clochnahill.

Wishing to better himself in the world, William Burness, with

his family, in 1766 left the cottage and land near Alloway Kirk for the farm of Mount Oliphant, on the estate of Doonholm, about a mile and a half distant, and correspondingly farther away from Ayr. This was a high-lying holding of some 80 or 90 acres, which the hard-up but highly respected farmer was assisted to enter by means of a loan of £100, advanced by his kind-hearted employer Mr. Ferguson. The two boys continued to be taught by Murdoch, but the little school was only kept up for a year or two longer, Murdoch then leaving for a better position. Their regular education was thus broken off, but their father did what he could to supply the place of a duly qualified teacher, though the boys were engaged, for a part of the day at least, in farmwork. The first book the youthful poet read (apart from schoolbooks) was a *Life of Hannibal*, lent him by Murdoch.

Very interesting details are given both by Gilbert Burns and Murdoch regarding this period of the poet's life and education, and serve to supplement—or present in more matter-of-fact terms—what he himself tells us of his early days in his autobiographic letter to Dr. Moore, to be found in the second volume of this work. Part of Gilbert's statement is as follows: "Under Mr. John Murdoch we learned to read English tolerably well, and to write a little. He taught us too the English Grammar. I was too young to profit much from his lessons in grammar, but Robert made some proficiency in it, a circumstance of considerable weight in the unfolding of his genius and character; as he soon became remarkable for the fluency and correctness of his expression, and read the few books that came in his way with much pleasure and improvement; for even then he was a reader when he could get a book. . . . Nothing could be more retired than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant. We rarely saw anybody but the members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age, or near it, in the neighbourhood. . . . My father was for some time almost the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us as if we had been men; and was at great pains, while we accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge or confirm our virtuous habits."

Among the few books owned by William Burness was Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, forming a tolerably comprehensive

manual of ancient history; and he borrowed for his sons' reading Salmon's *Geographical Grammar*, a bulky work, descriptive of the different countries of the world, Derham's *Physico- and Astro-Theology*, and Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Creation*, works which Robert read "with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled . . . for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches". One of the books that he read in a borrowed copy was *The History of Sir William Wallace*. The story of Wallace, as we learn from himself, "poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest".

The children, both boys and girls, were taught arithmetic by their father, and the girls apparently got little more education of any kind. At the age of thirteen or fourteen the young poet and his brother were sent for a short time "week about" to Dalrymple Parish School, two or three miles from their home, in order to improve their writing; and about the same period the boys again came under the influence of Mr. Murdoch, who was now a teacher in Ayr. Besides lending him books Murdoch had Robert with him for two or three weeks as a pupil, and the latter now got an introduction to the French language, which his teacher was then himself studying, and in which he became very proficient. "When he returned," says Gilbert, "he brought home with him a French dictionary and grammar, and the *Adventures of Telemachus* in the original. In a little while, by the assistance of these books, he had acquired such a knowledge of the language as to read and understand any French author in prose. This was considered as a sort of prodigy," and as a result it brought the young student under the notice of several people of good position, and so was the means of getting him the loan of books to read, while he was also advised to attempt the study of Latin. Accordingly he procured a Latin grammar, but this he found "dry and uninteresting"—like many another young scholar—and subsequent desultory or half-hearted attempts to get an elementary knowledge of Latin had little result.

An interesting paragraph or two may be given from Murdoch's account of this the most remarkable pupil he ever had. Murdoch, who was an Ayrshire man, had himself received a liberal education and was a thoroughly competent teacher. In after days he

published some educational works and taught French and English in London, where he had another noteworthy pupil, namely, Talleyrand. "Robert, and his younger brother Gilbert," he says, "had been grounded a little in English before they were put under my care. They both made a rapid progress in reading, and a tolerable progress in writing. In reading, dividing words into syllables by rule, spelling without book, parsing sentences, &c., Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their seniors. The books most commonly used in the school were the Spelling Book, the New Testament, the Bible, Mason's [or rather Masson's] *Collection of Prose and Verse*, and Fisher's *English Grammar*. They committed to memory the hymns and other poems of that collection with uncommon facility. This facility was partly owing to the method pursued by their father and me, in instructing them, which was to make them thoroughly acquainted with the meaning of every word in each sentence that was to be committed to memory. . . . As soon as they were capable of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural prose order, sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words, and to supply the ellipses. . . .

"Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination and to be more of the wit than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little Church Music; here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear in particular was dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was grave, and expressive of a serious contemplative and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said, 'Mirth, with thee I mean to live'; and, certainly, if any person who knew the boys had been asked which of them was the most likely to court the Muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind."

While the family lived at Mount Oliphant, their having the county town within easy reach was not without advantages for the young poet, socially and otherwise, as indicated above and as he himself recognized (see his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore). He thus formed friendships with boys of a superior rank in life, who sometimes lent him books, and who never, as he says,

"insulted the clouterly appearance of my ploughboy carcass, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of all the seasons". His health would be none the worse though neither head nor feet were covered. The farm, however, turned out a very poor bargain, and entailed upon the members of the Burns family an excessive amount of toil—"the unceasing toil of a galley slave",—while the farmer also met with losses of cattle by accident and disease. "To the buffetings of misfortune", says Gilbert, "we could only oppose hard labour, and the most rigid economy. . . . My brother at the age of thirteen assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt at our tender years, under these straits and difficulties, was very great. To think of our father growing old (for he was now above fifty), broken down with the long-continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children and in a declining state of circumstances—these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the deepest distress. I doubt not but the hard labour and sorrow of this period of his life was in a great measure the cause of that depression of spirits with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull headache, which, at a future period of his life, was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time."

Still, depressing as was the Mount Oliphant period in many ways, it was not a period of altogether unbroken gloom. The poet's "strong appetite for sociability" as he says, together with his "constitutional hypochondriac taint", made him "fly solitude"; while his social qualities, now beginning to develop, made him welcome in many companies, and his heart being "completely tinder" was "eternally lighted up by some goddess or other". And besides having his own affairs of the heart, he was a confidant and ally of others, so that he came to be "in the secret of half the amours in the parish". To this period belongs the poet's first attempt at rhyme, an attempt stimulated by association with "a bewitching creature" in the harvest-field, who sang a love song said to have been composed by a country laird's son,

with no greater amount of "scholar-craft" than Burns himself. In emulation of the young laird he produced his song *Handsome Nell*, which was written probably in the year 1775, and is the piece printed first in the present edition of his poems. Of this episode he gives us quite an idyllic account in his autobiographical sketch, and the feelings and aspirations by which he was animated at about the same time are touchingly depicted also in his poetical epistle to Mrs. Scott of Wauchope, written years afterwards. As he says, love and poesy began with him together, and love and poesy may be said to have continued with him to the end. And as he began in emulation of another, so also it was emulation of others that gave rise to some of his finest efforts. Another of his distractions while at Mount Oliphant was attending a country dancing school, "to give his manners a brush". This, it seems, was a rebellious action done in defiance of his father's commands, and caused him great and lasting displeasure.

During the stay of the family at Mount Oliphant the poet, now aged seventeen, spent part of the summer of 1776 at Kirkoswald, in southern Ayrshire, attending a noted school there—in the district to which his mother belonged—and learning mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c. Smuggling was briskly carried on here, and the poet's knowledge of life was so far extended that, among other things, he says, "he learned to look unconcernedly on a large tavern-bill, and mix without fear in a drunken squabble". But at his years he must, generally at least, have been merely an onlooker in such affairs. His schoolwork, however, went on all right until "a charming *fillette*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off in a tangent from the spheres of my studies". He came home considerably improved, as he believed; his reading had been enlarged by the addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's works, and he "had seen mankind in a new phasis". He now began to practise letter writing, instigated thereto partly by the study of a collection of letters that came under his notice, written by the wits of Queen Anne's reign.

The Kirkoswald school completed Burns's schooling or formal education, which altogether, as we have seen, did not amount to a great deal, and may appear insignificant, or even contemptible, in these days of high-pressure education at elementary or more

advanced public schools of the most recent pattern. Burns, however, was more fortunate than many of his compeers in coming under the close attention of a real teacher for some time, and also in getting books to read, which in many country districts were then scarce enough. It is perhaps useless to speculate upon what the result might have been had he received a university education. He seems to have had no inclination in that direction, and even speaks somewhat scornfully of "college classes" and of attempting "to climb Parnassus by dint o' Greek". Geniuses are apt to do a great deal in educating themselves in their own way, and college classes would certainly have done little towards making Burns the great singer he was, and the poet of Scottish rural life, of homely things, of love, liberty, patriotism, and kindly human sentiment.

In 1777 Mount Oliphant was left for a considerably larger farm —Lochlea or Lochlie in the parish of Tarbolton, some 8 or 9 miles to the north-east of Ayr and 5 south-east of Kilmarnock. Before this, to add to the troubles of the family, their kind landlord had died, and, as Burns says, "we fell into the hands of a factor who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my tale of *Two Dogs*. . . . My indignation yet boils at the threatening insolent epistles from the scoundrel tyrant, which used to set us all in tears." Factors, that is to say, land-stewards or agents, are apt to be—or appear to be—harsh and unsympathetic when tenants cannot pay their rents, and of this one we know nothing more than what the poet tells us. How the struggling hard-up farmer of Mount Oliphant managed to enter upon a larger holding than the one he had left is somewhat of a mystery, though we learn that "the nature of the bargain was such as to throw a little ready money into his hands at the commencement of his lease, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable". Probably the landlord advanced some money in lieu of better house accommodation, or for certain improvements to be effected.

At Lochlea Burns was naturally introduced to new scenes and new acquaintances. Before long, he and his brother Gilbert, with seven or eight of these latter, formed themselves into a society called the Bachelors' Club, which held monthly meetings for the purposes of mutual entertainment and improvement, and was, indeed, a kind of debating society. "There can be no

doubt", says Mr. Lockhart,[1] one of his chief biographers, "that to the habit of arranging his thoughts and expressing them in somewhat of a formal shape, thus early cultivated, we ought to attribute much of that conversational skill which, when he first mingled with the upper world, was generally considered as the most remarkable of all his personal accomplishments. Burns's associates of the Bachelors' Club must have been young men possessed of talents and accomplishments, otherwise such minds as his and Gilbert's could not have persisted in measuring themselves against theirs." One of these, David Sillar, afterwards a schoolmaster, gives us a few interesting details regarding the poet's outward and other characteristics at this date. "He wore the only tied hair in the parish", he tells us—that is, he had his hair done up in a queue or short "pig-tail", a fashion for some time in vogue—"and in the church, his plaid, which was of a particular colour, I think fillemot,[2] he wrapped in a particular manner round his shoulders". The youthful bard, it would seem, liked to show by something in his dress and habit, that, as he doubtless felt, he was different from the sons of toil around him. His social talents, we learn, readily brought him acquaintances, but his tendency to satire—"a certain satirical seasoning", as Sillar calls it—which was apt to flavour his conversation, while "it set the rustic circle in a roar" also gave rise to "suspicious fear". Sillar became very intimate with the poet, and by and by he was honoured by having the famous *Epistle to Davie* addressed to him. To the notes attached to this piece the reader may refer for further particulars. Referring apparently to the beginning of this period, Burns himself declares that he was "perhaps the most ungainly, awkward being in the parish".

In 1781–2 the Lochlea period was broken by a somewhat important episode in the poet's career—six months or more spent by him at the seaport town of Irvine in the trade of flax dressing.

[1] John Gibson Lockhart (born 1794, died 1854) was the son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott, and wrote a *Life* of him that is one of the most famous biographies in literature. His *Life of Burns* first came out in 1828 as one of the volumes of *Constable's Miscellany*. It has attained the position of a classic, but has had to be supplemented and corrected in regard to various matters. Carlyle's famous *Essay on Burns* was contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* in the form of a review of Lockhart's *Life*, apart from which Carlyle seems to have had comparatively little knowledge regarding the poet. Lockhart was long editor of the *Quarterly Review*.

[2] A kind of yellowish-brown or dead-leaf colour.

According to Gilbert he was anxious to marry and settle down, and thought that by flax dressing the money needed was more likely to be made than by farming. The brothers, while working as labourers for their father, and receiving a yearly wage, had for several years raised flax on the farm on their own account—flax being at this period a somewhat important crop in Scotland—and the flax-dressing project was the outcome of this. The poet's own statement is that he entered upon it "partly through whim, and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life", and that it came to an untimely end through the shop being burned down owing to "the drunken carelessness of my partner's wife, while we were giving a welcome carousal to the new year". Gilbert, on the other hand, tells us that he gave it up "as neither agreeing with his health nor inclination". Mirthful and melancholy moods were singularly apt to jostle each other in Burns's ever-varying feelings. Only a few days before this merrymaking he had been writing to his father in a desponding, melancholy, moralizing strain, declaring that he was transported at the thought that "ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains and uneasiness, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it". Perhaps the fact that he had been jilted about this time by "a *belle fille* whom he adored" had something to do with his melancholy mood; little, however, is known regarding this particular love affair; but the jilting, it seems, was accompanied "with peculiar circumstances of mortification".

At Irvine he had mixed with associates somewhat lax in their views of personal conduct, and became particularly intimate with a sailor named Richard Brown, whose friendship, he alleges, did him a mischief, chiefly from the fact that "he spoke of a certain fashionable failing with levity, which hitherto I had regarded with *horror*"; the consequence being, he adds, that soon after he resumed the plough he wrote the well-known *Welcome to his Love-begotten Daughter*, his daughter by a servant girl of the name of Betty Paton. But it was some time after he resumed the plough, namely in 1784, that this piece of verse was written, whatever Brown's influence may have done. Richard Brown, who had received a good education, strongly advised him to send some of his verses to a magazine, and "to endeavour at the character of a

poet". The two kept up a close friendship in after life, Brown being latterly captain of a merchantman. He is said to have demurred to the poet's statement tending to attach blame to him; and some may think that if it was true, "Rantin' rovin' Robin", "the rantin' dog the daddie o't", proved an apt enough pupil. Burns could hardly have reached the age of two or three and twenty and mixed among the ordinary society of the country-side without often hearing the said subject treated with more or less of levity. Of course, the influence of Brown, who had knocked about the world and seen a good deal of life—who was endowed, Burns asserts, with every noble manly virtue, and whom he loved, admired, and strove to imitate—would be greater than that of the poet's ordinary untravelled associates. As the custom then was, he had to do public penance in church on account of this breach of the seventh commandment, and his affection for ministers henceforth was certainly not increased thereby. The *Welcome*, which may be described as a sort of challenge to the censorious, while it is marked by right feeling and manly sentiments, is at the same time marred by coarseness, and is not free from more than a spice of fanfaronade.[1] In it Burns certainly speaks of the young woman with some affection and respect, but he does not seem to have promised or thought of marriage with her. The child was brought up in the Burns household, under her paternal grandmother and as one of the family.[2]

Burns became a freemason in 1781, his lodge being held in a public-house in the village of Tarbolton. He was an enthusiastic member of the craft, speedily took a leading place in

[1] It is interesting to compare how different editors or writers on Burns have dealt with this rather notorious ditty, belonging to a somewhat important epoch in Burns's life. Lockhart regarded it as "a piece in which some very manly feelings are expressed along with others which it can give no one pleasure to contemplate". Robert Chambers seems to have ignored it, doubtless regarding it as unsuitable for publication in his edition of the Life and Works. The Rev. George Gilfillan thought that in it Burns "tried to laugh the affair over, glorying in his shame". Mr. Henley (in his Essay in *The Poetry of Robert Burns*—"Centenary Edition", by W. E. Henley and T. F. Henderson, 1896–7) described it as "half-humorous, half-defiant, and wholly delightful"; and a similar view is taken by the authors of *The Bookman History of English Literature* (T. Seccombe and W. Robertson Nicoll, 1907), who tell us that "one of his earliest and most delightfully spontaneous effusions was his tender welcome to an illegitimate child". Dr. Nicoll's approval might hardly have been expected, considering the destination in the next world which the writer so clearly assigns for men of his cloth.

[2] There is a statement to the effect that Burns's mother would have been pleased if he had married Betty Paton, who is said to have been sensible and industrious, but plain-looking, rude, and uncultivated.

the lodge, and became depute-master in 1784. There are many references to Masonry in his poems, and he wrote a well-known *Farewell to the Brethren of St. James's Lodge, Tarbolton.* "The ardour of the poet in freemasonry", says Robert Chambers, "was one of his most conspicuous passions. It seems almost incomprehensible that a mind like his could delight to associate with a set of men so different from himself as the ordinary tradespeople of Tarbolton. . . . Yet so it was." But probably those better fitted to judge of the matter, "the brothers of the mystic tie", themselves, will see nothing to wonder at in this; and Lockhart's favourable judgment regarding some of his close associates has already been given.

In speaking of the seven years during which the Burns family lived at Lochlea, Gilbert Burns has some interesting remarks on his brother's attitude towards the opposite sex: "Though when young he was bashful and awkward in his intercourse with women, yet when he approached manhood his attachment to their society became very strong, and he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver. The symptoms of his passion were often such as nearly to equal those of the celebrated Sappho. I never indeed knew that he 'fainted, sunk, and died away'; but the agitation of his mind and body exceeded anything of the kind I ever knew in real life. He had always a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life. His love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure, to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms, out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination; and there was often a great disparity between his fair captivator and her attributes." Gilbert also tells us that it was sexual charms that had the chief attraction for him, and that he was never a Platonic lover, whatever he might think.

The first four years at Lochlea were years of considerable comfort; after this came troubles again, regarding which we are not fully informed. No doubt the disastrous harvest of 1782, long remembered in Scotland, would inflict its due share of calamity on the Lochlea family. More serious than this was the illness of the head of the household, who was gradually

dying of consumption. Gilbert's brief statement regarding the troubles alluded to is as follows: "No writing had ever been made out of the conditions of the lease; a misunderstanding took place respecting them; the subjects in dispute were submitted to arbitration, and the decision involved my father's affairs in ruin. He lived to know of this decision but not to see any execution in consequence of it. He died on the 13th of February, 1784." He was buried at Alloway Kirk. His last days were troubled, we are told, with forebodings regarding the future of his gifted son, whose "pulse's maddening play" he had noted. Had he lived he would doubtless have seen some of his forebodings fulfilled (as in the Betty Paton affair), and if death spared him this it also took him from the joy of witnessing his son's glory.

During the Lochlea period Burns's poetical powers were distinctly ripening, and, though he still remained unknown to the public, he there wrote songs and other pieces now regarded as precious possessions, such as *Mary Morrison*; *Green grow the Rashes*; *The Rigs o' Barley*; *My Nannie, O*; *Peggy* ("Now Westlin Winds"); *The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie*; and *Poor Mailie's Elegy*. His acquaintance with books naturally became much enlarged, and now included more or less of the works of Pope, Shakspere, Addison, Locke and other English writers. He had also become familiar with Allan Ramsay's poems, and meeting with Fergusson's Scottish poems, as he says: "I strung anew my wildly sounding rustic lyre with emulating vigour".

Three months before the death of their father, and when his affairs were approaching a crisis, the neighbouring farm of Mossgiel had been taken by Robert and Gilbert, "as an asylum for the family in case of the worst. It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family and as a joint concern among us." They entered it as sub-tenants, their landlord being Gavin Hamilton of Mauchline, who then held it on lease.[1] Mossgiel is about 2 miles from Lochlea and 1 mile from Mauchline, and is a high-lying place commanding fine views, but said

[1] A scurrilous rhymester of the district—a Saunders Tait—to whom Burns had given offence, while depicting the poet himself as a young reprobate, roundly accuses the Burns family of swindling their late landlord, who certainly appears to have lost money over their tenancy. Their reputation could hardly have suffered, however, or they would not have got another farm so readily, and their new landlord, who was a lawyer, must have known the facts well enough.

to be not otherwise a very desirable holding. Probably the joint resources of the family were not sufficient to stock the farm properly, and difficulties were not long in making themselves felt. One cannot help suspecting that neither Robert nor Gilbert was specially cut out for a farmer's life, whatever in this respect may have been their father's qualifications. The poet, however (as he himself states), entered upon this new enterprise with the very best resolutions to acquit himself as a prudent and diligent farmer —read farming books, calculated crops, attended markets, &c.— but the fates proved adverse to his success as a farmer; and as it turned out he did not farm here more than some two and a half years, though Mossgiel was at least nominally his residence up to 1788, and is associated with some of the finest and most remarkable of his poetical pieces.

The period of his connection with Mossgiel and Mauchline was perhaps the most momentous in his life. He began it unknown to the world, and had as yet done nothing that could ever have made him widely known; but he now produced a series of poems so varied and brilliant, so thoroughly Scottish, so markedly inspired by native genius and the warmest humanity, that when published they at once took that place in the hearts of his fellow countrymen and in the world's literature which they ever since retained. For the poet personally this period formed a time of trial, a time of new and searching experiences such as one brought up like him has seldom come through, and it showed him in all his strength, if it also showed him in some of his weaknesses, and perhaps left him weaker than it found him.

About the beginning of the Mossgiel period (1784) "polemical divinity was putting the country half mad", as the poet says, and the two chief religious factions at war with each other were known as the Old and the New Light, the former being Calvinists of the straitest sect, while the latter were more liberal in their views, many of them indeed being deeply tinctured with a form of rationalism. Burns, whose father held anti-Calvinistic opinions, was drawn into the controversy partly through his interest in such matters and his fondness for the display of his argumentative powers, partly through his connection with Gavin Hamilton his landlord, a lawyer in Mauchline and a most worthy and liberal-minded man, with whom he was on the most friendly

terms, and who had been attacked on paltry grounds by his Old Light parish minister. The first piece of Burns's "rhyming ware" that became generally known (as yet only in manuscript, however) was connected with the New and Old Light controversy, and was entitled *The Twa Herds*, that is "The Two Shepherds", the subject being a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists. Among both clergy and laity that belonged to the New Light faction "it met with a roar of applause". (See the poem and notes attached to it in its proper place.)

Other poems dealing more or less with the same theme and belonging to the same period were *Holy Willie's Prayer*, *The Ordination*, *Epistle to the Rev. John M'Math*, *Address to the Unco' Guid*, and *The Holy Fair*. Pictures of different phases of Scottish rural life are given in *The Cotter's Saturday Night* and *Halloween*, two of the most famous of all Burns's works. Somewhat in the same vein are *The Twa Dogs* and *The Auld Farmer's New-Year Salutation to his Auld Mare*; others more or less akin in subject being the *Mouse* and the *Daisy*. Among purely imaginative pieces are *Death and Dr. Hornbook*, *The Vision*, and *The Brigs of Ayr*. Among poetic "Epistles" to intimate friends are two *To Davie* (the first being the chief), three to *John Lapraik*, with others to *John Goudie*, to *William Simson*, to *James Smith*, and *To a Young Friend*, besides the *Dedication to Gavin Hamilton*. Here must be mentioned also as of the same period, the "Cantata" of *The Jolly Beggars*, the *Address to the Deil*, *Scotch Drink*, *Man was Made to Mourn*, *Tam Samson's Elegy*; and among songs, *There was a Lad* and *The Bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle*. Some of these pieces, especially perhaps the Epistles, are marked with the most vivid personal notes, bringing in the writer's own feelings, aims, and aspirations, with sagacious reflections on the problems of life, and on phases of society coming within the sphere of his experience.

His circle of friends and acquaintances was now naturally enough extending, though as yet Burns had come closely in contact only with persons such as are readily to be met with in "the cool sequestered vale of life", persons who but for him would never have been heard of at the present day, though worthy enough people in their way. Some of them, however, were men of superior abilities and of superior standing in their

own localities—ministers, doctors, lawyers, and the like. Several of them also were well able to appreciate his poetical abilities, and helped to make his poems known to others. One in particular, Mr. Aiken, an Ayr lawyer, was so enthusiastic in reading his verses to friends that the poet declared he "read him into fame". Dr. MacKenzie, of Mauchline, who became acquainted with the family while they were still at Lochlea, recommended the poet to more than one gentleman who afterwards befriended him.

Naturally the inflammable poet made acquaintances among the young women of his locality, and to "the Belles of Mauchline" two effusions were devoted early in his twenty-sixth year. In the first of these he warns them against "rakish rooks like Rob Mossgiel"; in the second, while devoting a word of criticism to half a dozen of them, he finishes by declaring that "Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'". About two years later Jean Armour became his wife, but a good deal was to happen before that event took place.

He had spoken of her as "my Jean" in some of the pieces mentioned above (*Epistle to Davie*, *The Vision*), and the courtship had gone on for a year or more when it began to appear likely that she might have "a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed". Burns was now in a dilemma. For this was a different affair from that of Betty Paton. She was merely a servant lass, and had probably never expected Burns to marry her. About his connection with her and its result he could make jocular rhymes, and probably the matter cost neither him nor the girl a heartache. For Jean, on the other hand, "rakish rook" as he might style himself, his affection was strong and real, though it is doubtful if at any time she, or any other woman, was the sole possessor of his heart. Jean was the daughter of a well-to-do master mason (afterwards referred to by Burns himself as an architect), a man of some substance, and she might have looked higher than a hard-up farmer for a match. Apart from affection and a sense of his responsibility towards Jean, as he was now something of a public man he had to consider how his conduct might appear in the eyes of such friends as Gavin Hamilton, Robert Aiken, and Dr. MacKenzie. But unluckily he was hardly in a position to settle down as a married man,

and his perplexities were great. For a time he was inclined to leave Jean in the lurch. This we know, since in a letter to his friend, James Smith of Mauchline, he thus declares himself: "Against two things I am fixed as fate—staying at home and owning her conjugally". Better feelings prevailed, however, and he gave her a written document sufficient in Scots law to form an irregular contract or acknowledgment of marriage. So far well; but Jean's father (who we may mention was one of the Old Light party) would have nothing to do with the poet as a son-in-law, even although aware of his daughter's unfortunate condition; and he brought her to consent to separation from Burns, and to the destruction of the paper so highly important to her. In this way he thought to put an end to the affair, though of course the destruction of the paper could hardly have such an effect, being only the destruction of evidence, not the annulment of a contract. The poet was even forbidden to call at the Armours' house, and in his view Jean seemed far too acquiescent in regard to these measures.

The part that Jean and her parents took in this affair had a most irritating and perturbing effect on Burns, who soon began to look upon himself as injured and aggrieved—all the more readily, probably, because he might consider himself rather magnanimous in giving up his determination not to own her conjugally. Jean he declared to be false and ungrateful, her treatment of him he stigmatized in strong terms, yet in a letter to a friend (12th June, 1786) he asseverated that he still loved her to distraction, and uttered the pious wish, "may Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my soul forgive her". (See note to *To Ruin.*) In letters or poems belonging to the summer of 1786 he declares himself heartbroken and driven to distraction; and at a later time also he speaks as if he had almost lost his reason over the affair. In April, 1786, however, writing to a friend,[1] after the break between Jean and him, he treats the matter in quite a burlesque vein, and with much that is highly extravagant says: "By degrees I have subsided into the time-settled sorrow of the sable widower, who,

[1] John Arnot of Dalquhatswood, Ayrshire, no very intimate friend. The letter, a copy of which was carefully preserved by the writer, is a long and singular production, bearing marks of Burns's close study of Sterne.

wiping away the decent tear, lifts up his grief-worn eye to look —for another wife".

The vacancy caused by the temporary loss of Jean had, it would thus appear, to be filled up, and a young woman named Mary Campbell—now commonly spoken of as Burns's "Highland Mary", a native of Argyllshire, and sometime nursemaid to Gavin Hamilton's children—was at hand to fill it. There has been a good deal of discussion regarding his love affair with Highland Mary, and the subject is involved in a certain amount of obscurity. Her identity has even been a matter of dispute. Years afterwards, in connection with his song *My Highland Lassie*, Burns himself furnished the following information: "This", he says, "was a composition of mine in very early life, before I was known at all in the world. My Highland lassie was a warmhearted, charming young creature as ever blessed a man with generous love. After a pretty long tract of the most ardent reciprocal attachment we met by appointment, on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot by the banks of Ayr, where we spent the day in taking farewell, before she should embark for the West Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of autumn following she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarcely landed when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to the grave in a few days, before I could even hear of her illness." Similarly, in connection with the song, "Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary", he explains that it was written by way of farewell to "a dear girl" in his "very early years", when he was thinking of going to the West Indies, thus connecting it with the present period. In a letter to Mrs. Dunlop (in 1789), in which he quotes from his song, "Thou ling'ring star", he refers to the possibility of meeting his lost sweetheart in a future state. "There should I," he says, "with speechless agony of rapture, again recognize my lost, my ever dear Mary! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honour, constancy, and love."

Little more regarding his connection with Highland Mary is known on the poet's own authority, and indeed he seems—contrary to his usual practice—to have been very reticent and even misleading in reference to it. Investigations have brought out

that his phrases "very early life" and the "long tract of reciprocal attachment" have to be interpreted as referring to the latter part of 1785 and the first part of 1786; and that his connection with Highland Mary was but a mere interlude between the acts of the Armour drama.[1] This was the belief of his own sister, and harmonizes with what his brother Gilbert says of him, that though "one fair captivator generally reigned paramount in his affections, there were underplots in the drama of his love". If his courting of Mary had lasted for any length of time it must have become generally known about Mauchline, but no one seems to have known anything of it outside his own family, to whom it was matter of surmise rather than actual knowledge, though Gilbert seems to have been, partially at least, acquainted with the affair. Besides inspiring songs when living, Mary is sung also in others, belonging to a later time, one of these—*To Mary in Heaven*—being considered by some as "the noblest of all his ballads". Her death seems to have taken place in October, 1786.

For a time Burns no doubt seemed to himself to be off with the old love and on with the new. Jean, he considered, had ungratefully cast him off, and as the paper he had given her was destroyed he desired to resume the status of a bachelor. In this he found the parish minister, Mr. Auld—who surely could have had no definite knowledge regarding the document that others seemed to treat so lightly,—ready to assist him, provided Burns submitted to the discipline of the Church. Along with Jean and other offenders, accordingly, he appeared in church and suffered rebuke; and he received, it seems, something in the nature of "a certificate as a single man", having, as he says, "put on sackcloth and ashes", and being indulged so far as to appear in his own seat instead of the "seat of shame" set apart for those subjected to public censure.

His affection for his future wife, however, was too strong for him; he could not give her up, although he declares that he tried to forget her and ran into all sorts of dissipations in order to bring this about. Notwithstanding his entanglement with

[1] Mr. William Scott Douglas (1815–83) was the first to point out the true position in Burns's history of the Highland Mary episode. He was a Burns enthusiast, and among other publications edited a handsome library edition (in six vols.—1877–9, published by Paterson, Edinburgh) of Burns's writings in prose and verse, containing a rich store of biographical material.

Mary Campbell, Jean is soon spoken of in his letters and verses as if she alone again held his heart—though a certain Eliza, we may remark, is also mentioned in sentimental terms. In the touching *Farewell*, written in prospect of his departure for the West Indies, his nearest relatives, his most intimate friends, and especially his Jean, are alluded to, while Mary, whom he had asked not long before if she would "Go to the Indies", is not mentioned; it is for Jean's sake that he asserts he must cross the Atlantic.

As, of course, he was liable for the support of his offspring by Jean (who became the mother of twins in September), and as her father took measures to establish this liability against him by legal means, it appears that, since his farming was far from profitable, he was willing even to take work as a day labourer to meet any claims likely to fall upon him. The result of Mr. Armour's setting the law in motion in order to make the poet find security for such a sum as his connection with Jean might impose upon him, was that for a time Burns was even in some fear lest he might be put in jail. In his difficulties some friends suggested an excise appointment for him, but to push his fortune abroad seemed preferable, and it was soon arranged that he should go to Jamaica as assistant overseer or bookkeeper on the estate of a Dr. Douglas, a gentleman of Ayrshire. To raise funds for his outfit and passage money was now the problem, and to solve it his friend Gavin Hamilton suggested that he should publish his poems by subscription. This happy suggestion was soon carried into effect. A notification of "Proposals for publishing by Subscription, Scottish Poems by Robert Burns",[1] was issued in April, 1786. The work was to be "elegantly printed, in one volume, octavo. Price stitched, Three shillings." John Wilson, Kilmarnock, was the printer. The book came out in the end of July, in an edition of six hundred copies, which were soon all disposed of, putting about twenty pounds into the author's pocket. Being thus supplied with funds, his passage was taken, when, fortunately, the poet's thoughts were turned in quite another direction, and a new era in his life began, as will presently be explained.

He had never wished to try his fortune in Jamaica (to which many young Scotsmen went at that period), far from it; he had

[1] It was at this time that he gave up spelling his name Burness.

been always hoping that something might turn up to make the step unnecessary. Self-pity and foreboding are among the feelings that appear in several poems belonging to this time, some of them pathetic enough in their way. Among them are *The Lament*, "occasioned by the unfortunate issue of a friend's amour"; *To Ruin*; *Despondency—An Ode*; *On a Scotch Bard gone to the West Indies*; *A Bard's Epitaph*; *The Farewell*; and *The Gloomy Night is Gath'ring Fast.* The last was written, he says, when he had "for some time been skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail", when he had taken his last farewell of his friends, and his chest was actually on the road to Greenock:

> Farewell, my friends! Farewell, my foes!
> My peace with these—my love with those—
> The bursting tears my heart declare,
> Farewell the bonnie banks of Ayr!

His effusions at this season of tribulation were not, however, uniformly gloomy, as witness his *Epistle to a Young Friend*, *Address of Beelzebub*, *Dedication to Gavin Hamilton*, his *Dream*, his stanzas on *Naething*, and his song *The Lass o' Ballochmyle.* The "bonny lass" was Miss Alexander, sister of Mr. Claude Alexander, who had recently bought the estate of which Mossgiel formed part. Burns wrote her a somewhat high-flown, or as James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, called it, a "flaming", letter, asking permission to publish the song, but received no answer—a fact that is capable of various explanations. (See notes accompanying the song in its proper place.)

In view of his going abroad, Burns executed (on 22nd July) a deed assigning over to Gilbert all his goods and belongings, prospective profits from his poems included, to be held by him in trust for the upbringing of his daughter, who was to have exclusive interest in the copyright after reaching the age of fifteen. Neither Jean nor Mary was apparently in his thoughts at that time.

The poems, when published in the famous Kilmarnock Edition, at once met with the most rapturous approval of the reading world, both in Ayrshire and elsewhere.[1] "Old and young," we

[1] Special copies of the small and unpretentious, but well-printed, volume now fetch enormous prices—£500, £600, £700.

are told, "high and low, grave and gay, learned or ignorant were alike delighted, agitated, transported. . . . Even ploughboys and maid-servants would have gladly bestowed the wages which they earned the most hardly, and which they wanted to purchase the necessary clothing, if they might but procure the works of Burns." The poet himself became an object of general interest, and men and women higher in rank than any with whom he had hitherto come in contact now showed him polite and friendly attentions. Among the first of these were Professor Dugald Stewart, of Edinburgh University, the philosopher, then residing at Catrine, in Ayrshire, and Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop,[1] an Ayrshire lady of birth and fortune, who, having been entranced by *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, immediately began a friendship and correspondence with the poet which lasted practically all his life. "His letters to Mrs. Dunlop", says Lockhart justly, "form a very large proportion of all his subsequent correspondence, and, addressed as they were to a person whose sex, age, rank, and benevolence inspired at once profound respect and a graceful confidence, will ever remain the most pleasing of all the materials of our poet's biography." Mrs. Stewart, of Afton, a lady of similar social position to Mrs. Dunlop, was even an earlier patroness, but there was not the same close connection between her and the poet, though she received early copies of some of his pieces.

Though all the copies of the Kilmarnock volume had so speedily been disposed of, Wilson, the printer, when Burns proposed that he should undertake a second edition, declined to do so unless the poet advanced £27 for the paper required to print a thousand copies. As Burns did not see his way to raise the money, the scheme came to nothing. Writing to his friend, Mr. Aiken, of Ayr, in the beginning of October, he expresses his keen disappointment at this. The letter is also extremely interesting in other ways, especially as showing Burns in a mood of deep feeling, caused by the general state of his affairs, but chiefly by the awkward position he was in through his relations to Jean Armour. "There is scarcely anything hurts me so much in being disappointed of my second edition as not having it in my power to

[1] She was born in 1730 and died in 1815, and was the wife of John Dunlop, Esq., of Dunlop, Ayrshire. She was descended from a brother of Sir William Wallace, the Scottish patriot, and her father was Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, a property she inherited.

show my gratitude to Mr. Ballantine by publishing my poem of *The Brigs of Ayr*.[1] I would detest myself as a wretch, if I thought I were capable, in a very long life, of forgetting the honest, warm, and tender delicacy with which he enters into my interests. . . .

"I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness from causes which you pretty well know—the pangs of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse,[2] which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society, or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. . . .

"You may perhaps think it an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment that strikes home to my very soul; though sceptical in some points of our current belief, yet I think I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stinted bourne of our present existence: if so, then how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence, how should I meet the reproaches of those who stand to me in the dear relation of children, whom I deserted in the smiling innocency of helpless infancy? O thou unknown Power! thou Almighty God, who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality! I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of Thy works, yet Thou hast never left me nor forsaken me!"

The first criticism of the poems, highly favourable to the new poet, was published in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, in the beginning of November. The first literary man and recognized critic with whom his poems brought Burns into personal relationship was Dr. Blacklock, of Edinburgh, well known in his day as a blind poet, and as a most amiable and benevolent man. Dr. Lawrie, minister of Loudoun and a friend of Burns (who made him and his family the subject of the poem designated *A Prayer*), had sent a copy of the poems and a sketch of the author's history to his friend Dr. Blacklock, with a request that he would do what

[1] The poem was dedicated or "inscribed" to this gentleman.

[2] "May we not reasonably suspect", says Robert Chambers, "that some of the 'wandering stabs of remorse' to which he alludes bore reference to Highland Mary?"

he could for the book and its author; and Dr. Blacklock, in reply, spoke highly of the merits of the poems, and recommended that a second and larger edition should immediately be printed in Edinburgh. Surprised and delighted at the criticism and advice (similar advice had already been given him, however, by Mr. Ballantine, of Ayr, and probably by others) the poet looked forward to Edinburgh and fame, and, after an interval of two months or so, he found himself in the streets of the metropolis, in November, 1786, having ridden all the way on a pony borrowed from a friend.

He had few acquaintances in Edinburgh. A Mauchline crony, however, John Richmond, previously a clerk to Gavin Hamilton, and now in an Edinburgh lawyer's office, had by this time established himself in the capital, and during the winter he shared his lodgings and bed with the poet,[1] who, in no long time, had acquaintances enough. Through his Ayrshire friends he was introduced to several men of influence, and among these none did so much for him, or earned so high a place in his regard and gratitude, as the Earl of Glencairn, a nobleman who died all too soon, and who is the subject of some of Burns's most heartfelt regretful lines. By the earl he was introduced to William Creech, the leading publisher in Edinburgh, who had been his tutor, and who, after some consideration, undertook the publication of the new edition, for which the earl exerted himself with much success to get subscribers. Among others whose acquaintance the poet made and who showed him friendly attentions were the Hon. Henry Erskine, Dean of the Faculty of Advocates (a body corresponding to the members of the bar in London); Henry Mackenzie, author of the once popular *Man of Feeling*, who greatly gratified the poet, and helped the sale of his book, by publishing a generous criticism of the poems in the Edinburgh periodical, *The Lounger*; Dr. Robertson, the historian, and Principal of the University; Dr. Hugh Blair, a noted sermoneer and authority on rhetoric; the learned and somewhat eccentric Lord Monboddo, a "law lord" or judge of the Court of Session, whose

[1] These lodgings were in a "close" off the Lawnmarket. In a letter to Mr. Ballantine he gives us a flashlight glimpse of his homely surroundings here—the landlady, a buxom middle-aged, God-fearing dame, sorely exercised at the ongoings of certain "Daughters of Belial" who were her too near neighbours; her opinion of the poet as "but a rough and roun' Christian", or one who might pass muster if not too closely scrutinized; &c.

patrimonial estate was not far distant from the native district of Burns's forefathers; and the kind-hearted, clever, and very unconventional Duchess of Gordon, then at the head of Edinburgh society. To Dr. Blair he had already been recommended by his Ayrshire friend, Dr. MacKenzie, of Mauchline, who had drawn Dr. Blair's special attention to *The Holy Fair*.

Thus supported Burns soon became quite a public character and celebrity of the day. Writing to Gavin Hamilton on December 7th, in a tone between jest and earnest, the poet declares that he was "in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see my birthday inserted among the wonderful events in the *Poor Robin's* and Aberdeen *Almanacs*, along with the Black Monday and the battle of Bothwell Bridge. My Lord Glencairn and the Dean of Faculty, Mr. H. Erskine, have taken me under their wing; and by all probability I shall soon be the tenth worthy, and the eighth wise man of the world." His being a freemason helped to bring him friends and acquaintances, and within a short time of his arrival he was appointed laureate of the lodge Canongate Kilwinning. The poetic firstfruits of his residence in the Scottish capital showed themselves in his *Address to Edinburgh* —"Edina, Scotia's darling seat",—a stately poem, well worthy of the subject. "Fair Burnet", mentioned in this piece (a daughter of Lord Monboddo), was, of all the Edinburgh beauties, the one he most admired, and, at her early death in 1790 he made her the subject of an elegy.

The winter of 1786–7, if it witnessed the triumph of Burns as a poet, must at the same time have been very much of an ordeal for him. He was made—and knew that he was being made—a "lion" in Edinburgh society, and the consciousness that curious, even if friendly, eyes were watching, must have been frequently with him in companies, many of them belonging to the more select circles of the capital. What seems to have most forcibly struck all with whom he came in contact—high and low, "gentle and simple", from the Duchess of Gordon downward[1]—was the

[1] A saying of the duchess regarding the poet is on record—that his conversation "carried her off her feet". Her Grace was quite capable of equally astonishing the poet, being noted not only for good nature but for "ready wit, marred by singular coarseness of speech". Coarse witticisms attributed to her are even yet current. Her maiden name was Jane Maxwell, and she was a daughter of the house of Monreith.

power and brilliancy of his conversation, the massiveness of his intellect. That he comported himself amid his altogether novel surroundings with dignity, even perhaps with something of pride, and nothing at all of servility; with a due sense of what belonged to him as man of genius and as poet; showing rustic plainness and simplicity in manner with little or no rustic awkwardness, or any signs that he considered himself to have been taken outside his proper sphere; is testified by some of those under whose eyes he directly came, and who were thoroughly qualified to speak on such matters. Of the poet as he appeared at this period one or two descriptions drawn from personal observation must be given in the language of the observers themselves, in order to preserve the full value of their statements. The testimony of Professor Dugald Stewart, who, as we have seen, had known Burns in Ayrshire and met him again at various times in Edinburgh, is especially interesting and valuable.

"The first time I saw Robert Burns", says the Professor, "was on the 23rd of October, 1786, when he dined at my house in Ayrshire, together with our common friend, Mr. John MacKenzie, surgeon in Mauchline, to whom I am indebted for the pleasure of his acquaintance. I am enabled to mention the date particularly by some verses[1] which Burns wrote after he returned home, and in which the day of our meeting is recorded. My excellent and much lamented friend, the late Basil, Lord Daer, happened to arrive at Catrine the same day, and by the kindness and frankness of his manners left an impression on the mind of the poet which never was effaced. . . .

"His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent, strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth; but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him, and listened with apparent attention and deference on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of anything approaching to meanness or servility

1 *Lines on meeting Lord Daer.* See poem in its proper place.

rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing perhaps was more remarkable among his various attainments than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language when he spoke in company; more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided more successfully than most Scotchmen the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.

"The attentions he received during his stay in town from all ranks and descriptions of persons were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country, nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance. His dress was perfectly suited to his station, plain and unpretending, with a sufficient attention to neatness. If I recollect aright he always wore boots, and when on more than usual ceremony, buckskin breeches. . . .

"In the course of the spring [of 1787] he called on me once or twice at my request, early in the morning, and walked with me to Braid Hills, in the neighbourhood of the town, when he charmed me still more by his private conversation than he had ever done in company. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature; and I recollect once he told me when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and the worth which they contained."

Among sketches of Burns as he appeared in companies chiefly composed of Edinburgh literary luminaries none is more interesting than that from the pen of Sir Walter Scott, who, as a lad of fifteen or sixteen, met him at the house of Professor Adam Ferguson, author of works on Roman history and mental science. Burns was much affected by an engraving of a soldier lying dead on the snow with his wife and child beside him—he actually shed tears,—and on asking the authorship of some lines of poetry accompanying it young Walter was the only one who could tell him, being rewarded by the poet with "a look and a word" that gave him "very great pleasure". "His person", says Sir Walter, "was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clown-

ish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. . . . I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, *i.e.* none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone I think indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large and of a dark cast, and glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. . . . I have only to add that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the Laird. I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station and information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment."

Of course, in companies largely composed of "grave and reverend signiors", staid men of mature years, connected with the university, the Church, the law, or literature, Burns would cut a very different figure from what he did in companies consisting of those who had more of the character of equals, so far as years and social station were concerned. His brother Gilbert tells us—what indeed we know from himself—that he was very apt to be jealous of those who were richer than himself and of greater consequence in life, and bitterly resented the inequalities of fortune; hence his pride must have been often galled in Edinburgh, especially, for instance, when he thought he was being made a show of, and if there were evident attempts "to draw him out". He himself confides to his diary that on one occasion even his patron, the Earl of Glencairn, had wounded him to the soul by showing engrossing attention to a "dunderpate", when the company con-

sisted solely of his lordship, the poet, and said dunderpate; so much so that the fiery bard was almost on the point, as he says, "of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand, and looked so benevolently good at parting—God bless him! Though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues." He also confesses that he harboured bitter resentment at the way he was looked upon by the "stately patricians" of the metropolis, whom he does not otherwise indicate.

In regard to this subject some remarks may be quoted from Mr. Lockhart, who must have been well acquainted with men who had met the poet in companies of various kinds. "It is sufficiently apparent", he says, "that there were many points in Burns's conversational habits which men accustomed to the delicate observances of refined society, might be more willing to tolerate under the first excitement of personal curiosity, than from any very deliberate estimate of the claims of such a genius, under such circumstances developed. He by no means restricted his sarcastic observations on those whom he encountered in the world to the confidence of his notebook, but startled polite ears with the utterance of audacious epigrams, far too witty not to obtain general circulation in so small a society as that of the Northern Capital, far too bitter not to produce deep resentment, far too numerous not to spread fear almost as widely as admiration. Even when nothing was farther from his thoughts than to inflict pain, his ardour often carried him headlong into sad scrapes." Probably he showed more deference in Edinburgh society at the beginning than he did later; but, as Lockhart assures us, "he manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation, a most thorough conviction that in a society of the most eminent men of his nation he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; . . . and—last and probably worst of all—was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less magnificent; with wit in all

likelihood still more daring—often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had ere long no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves". Burns was by no means one of those who "suffer fools gladly" and was somewhat too apt, it appears, to let this be seen, to whatever rank in society the victim might belong.

If before the winter was over he was less welcome among the "patricians" of the metropolis, he was more welcome in other circles that were far more congenial to him. Tavern life was then in its heyday in Edinburgh, and to it Burns took as kindly as possible. Long before this he had learned, as he tells us, not to be concerned at the sight of a large tavern bill; he had also sung the praises of Scotch drink, and had played his part manfully at "drucken writers' feasts", and similar orgies even "'mang godly priests"; but, taking them altogether, such jollifications seem to have amounted to comparatively little in the way of dissipation. In Ayrshire, for one thing, the poet had his farming to attend to; but in Edinburgh it was different—he was now an idle man, had money in his pocket, and, moreover, good company was always at hand—or, at least, company that was always ready to make him welcome in some snug tavern or other. In those days, and much later, to be "overcome" with liquor was generally deemed a venial offence indeed—if but some little consideration were given to times and seasons. The tavern life of Edinburgh had been too much for poor Robert Fergusson —"my elder brother in misfortune, by far my elder brother in the muse" as Burns calls him—though to be sure Fergusson was neither mentally nor physically the equal of Burns; and it is pretty clear that the younger poet did not undergo the like ordeal altogether unscathed. There are some temperaments and constitutions to which alcohol in any form is little less than poison, and Burns, with his sensitive, high-strung, excitable nature, seems to have been a subject ill-fitted to withstand its potency. His early biographer, Robert Heron,[1] a talented but somewhat harum-scarum man of letters, who knew Burns, and

[1] Robert Heron (born 1764, died 1807), a native of Kirkcudbrightshire, studied for the Church, but devoted himself to literature, latterly in London, and was a voluminous writer. His short life of Burns came out in 1797, and contained some excellent criticism. Heron was improvident, and was at one time in jail for debt, but was a man of real ability.

whose statements Lockhart adopts, speaking of this period, assures us that "The *Bucks* of Edinburgh accomplished, in regard to Burns, that in which the *boors* of Ayrshire had failed . . . too many of his hours were now spent at the tables of persons who delighted to urge conviviality to drunkenness in the tavern. . . . He *suffered* himself to be surrounded by a race of miserable beings, who were proud to tell that they had been in company with BURNS, and had seen Burns as loose and as foolish as themselves. He was not yet irrecoverably lost to temperance and moderation, but he was already almost too much captivated with these wanton revels. . . . He now also began to contract something of new arrogance in conversation," &c. "Of these failings," says Lockhart, in his usual kindly spirit, "and indeed of all Burns's failings, it may be safely asserted, that there was more in his history to account and apologize for them, than can be alleged in regard to almost any other great man's imperfections." Heron's criticism was mayhap too harsh, but it was probably high time for Burns to turn his back upon Edinburgh, though he may not as yet have realized, as he afterwards did, that "occasional hard drinking" was "the devil" to him, or that he parted with "a slice of his constitution" on every such occasion.

The new edition of the Poems came out on April 21, 1787. It was an octavo volume, published at five shillings to subscribers, six shillings to the general public, with a prose dedication by the poet, "To the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt", and a long list of names of subscribers. There were altogether over fifteen hundred subscribers, and their names were given in for a total of three thousand copies. Many of the nobility and gentry, and of the most distinguished members of Scottish society in general, came forward in this way to patronize the national poet. The Caledonian Hunt, in its corporate capacity, subscribed for a hundred copies (apart from subscriptions of individual members on their own account); Creech the publisher took five hundred to re-sell; and many of the subscribers took, or at least subscribed and paid for, more than one copy. The Earl of Eglinton, for instance, gave in his name for forty-two, the Duchess of Gordon for twenty-one, the Earl of Glencairn for eight, the Countess for sixteen, and so on. The printing

of a second impression (or rather edition), differing in some respects from the first, seems to have been begun before the first was fully printed off.[1]

The volume was enriched by a portrait of the author, engraved on copper by an able Edinburgh engraver named Beugo, his original being a portrait painted by the well-known artist Alexander Nasmyth. Beugo's engraving is generally understood to give the best likeness of Burns in existence, the engraver having had the poet to sit to him several times while finishing the work. Both painter and engraver had become personal friends of the poet and gave their services free. The poet's features are perhaps most familiar to the general public through reproductions, by engraving or otherwise, of the Nasmyth portrait, now in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Another excellent likeness of Burns is a drawing in red chalk on tinted paper by a notable, but comparatively little known painter, Archibald Skirving. A reproduction of this portrait—which is said to have been based partly on Nasmyth's, partly on recollection—adorns the present work.

How much money Burns got from his second edition is a matter of doubt. Writing to Dr. John Moore in January, 1789, he speaks of expecting to "clear about £400 some little odds", including £100 for the copyright. Creech is reported to have said that Burns received nearly £1100, but from this the printing and other expenses would fall to be deducted. Burns's friend, William Nicol, of the Edinburgh High School, declared as if from certain knowledge that the poet received £600 for his second edition, besides £100 for the copyright. Whatever the actual amount, Burns, as an author then all but unknown, was distinctly successful with his Edinburgh venture. Few poets have had such an early success. Perhaps it would have been better for him if he had henceforth made poetry the business of his life. Months before the book appeared Burns had been getting in subscription money. In a letter to Dr. MacKenzie, for instance, dated 11th January, 1787, he mentions receiving ten guineas from the Earl of Eglinton for "a brace of copies" of the forthcoming book. A month before this he had got ten as a gift from Mr. Patrick Miller, his future landlord. Doubtless other subscribers

[1] The earlier of the two is known as "the *stinking* edition", from the misprint of the word *skinking* in the *Address to a Haggis*.

were equally generous, but probably Burns kept no very accurate account of such sums. Some time after publication Creech agreed to pay him £100 for the copyright, but it was a very long time before accounts were finally settled between him and the poet. Having parted with the copyright, Burns of course had no pecuniary interest in future editions of the poems. The Edinburgh volume contained several new or somewhat recently composed poems, such as the *Address to Edinburgh*, the *Brigs of Ayr*, *Address to a Haggis*, *A Winter's Night*, and *Tam Samson's Elegy*, with others already mentioned—*Death and Dr. Hornbook*, *The Ordination*, and the *Address to the Unco Guid*, besides some songs and less important pieces. The printer of the volume was William Smellie, a notability in his day and one of the worthies of Edinburgh, a man of extensive knowledge, a voluminous writer, especially on natural history, and the translator of Buffon's great work.

A third edition of the poems was printed in London in 1787; another edition is said to have been issued at Edinburgh in 1790. A new Edinburgh edition in two volumes, called "Second Edition Considerably Enlarged" (by the insertion of certain new pieces), came out in 1793, and a somewhat improved reprint of this in 1794. Creech got Burns's assistance on the 1793 edition on exceedingly easy terms—namely, as many copies as the poet might require for presentation to friends, along with certain books that he specially wanted for himself.

Smellie became very friendly with the poet and introduced him to a convivial club, known by the fancy name of "The Crochallan Fencibles", comprising men of ability, learning, and good standing, who believed in the maxim *desipere in loco*, and for whose perusal Burns provided effusions that were not intended to be placed before the general public. Both Smellie and the publisher Creech figure in Burns's verses and in his correspondence. But more intimate with him than either or than most of his Edinburgh associates was William Nicol, a teacher of the High School, more particularly mentioned below. On a similar footing of intimacy was Alexander Cunningham, a lawyer, to whom there is a series of letters in Burns's correspondence, and whose love affairs also inspired verses by the poet. Cunningham was a man of some taste and refinement, and with him

Burns could discuss the serious things of life in a way in which probably he never did with Nicol. Towards Cunningham he was drawn by sympathy and community of feeling, while the pedagogue seems rather to have hooked himself on to the poet, whom he intensely admired.

Among others with whom Burns became acquainted in Edinburgh was James Johnson, an engraver and music-seller, who had by this time begun the preparation of the *Scots Musical Museum*, a work ultimately extending to six volumes and containing six hundred songs with their airs harmonized for the harpsichord or piano. The poet became a warm friend of Johnson and joined with enthusiasm in his enterprise, which had a decided effect in directing his efforts towards song-writing. As David Laing says, except in regard to the first volume issued in 1787, "he ought to be considered not merely as a contributor but as the proper and efficient editor of the work. He not only contributed a large number of original songs, expressly written for it, but he applied to every person likely to render assistance, and whilst visiting different parts of the country diligently gleaned fragments of old songs hitherto unpublished, which he completed with additional lines or stanzas as might be required." He also wrote prefaces to several of the volumes, that for volume second being dated March 1, 1788. Among Burns's contributions to the *Museum* it is often very difficult to decide what should really be considered products of his own muse. He was quite well aware that many of the things he sent Johnson had but little value, were indeed "silly compositions", as he calls them; but he explains that "many beautiful airs wanted words, and in the hurry of other avocations, if I could string a parcel of rhymes together anything near tolerable, I was fain to let them pass".

An interesting incident of his Edinburgh visit may here be mentioned—his ordering a tombstone and providing an inscription for the grave of Robert Fergusson, in Canongate Churchyard. A letter of the poet regarding this monument tells us (in 1792) that the architect "was two years in erecting it after I had commissioned him for it, and, I have been two years in paying him after he sent me his account; so he and I are quits". Burns and Fergusson, it may be added, were both fre-

quenters of the Edinburgh theatre, and while Burns wrote a prologue for Mr. Woods[1], a popular actor of the time, to be recited on his benefit night, Fergusson was an intimate friend of the same gentleman, known in his day as "the Scottish Roscius", and in his poetic *Last Will* left him his copy of Shakspere's works.

On the 5th of May, 1787, after a six months' residence in the city, Burns left Edinburgh in company with a young friend named Robert Ainslie, for some time very intimate with the poet, and the recipient of many letters from him. Ainslie was then a law apprentice, and doing something in the way of sowing wild oats; he was afterwards a highly respected member of the Edinburgh body of lawyers known as Writers to the Signet, among whom he was admitted in 1789, and was also the author of edifying books. Mr. Ainslie belonged to Berwickshire, and Burns had the intention not only of visiting his friend's people there, but also of making a tour in the Border country, so closely associated with song and ballad of former days. His tour, which lasted till the beginning of June, took him to Duns, Coldstream, Kelso, Jedburgh, Melrose, Selkirk, Dunbar, and other places in Scotland, to which may be added Berwick; while in England it included Alnwick, Warkworth, Morpeth, Newcastle, Longtown, and Carlisle. He was hospitably entertained at the mansions of various country gentlemen and others, and left a brief diary of his travels and adventures, containing remarks on persons and places. Some of his criticisms on members of the fair sex (his remarks, of course, were not intended for publication) are anything but complimentary, are indeed surprisingly severe, though he also admits having nearly lost his heart on one or two occasions. The tour appears to have been productive or suggestive of only one piece of verse —the rhyming Epistle to his publisher, Creech: "Auld chuckie Reekie's sair distrest".

[1] It was in this prologue that, according to Prof. Nichol, who long held the Chair of English Literature in Glasgow University, Burns, "perpetrated his worst criticism—'Here Douglas forms wild Shakespeare into plan'". This, of course, refers to John Home's Tragedy *Douglas*, which created so much stir in its day, and had young Norval as its hero. "Wild" as an epithet for Shakespeare was borrowed by Burns from the poet Thomson. The same critic notes the following from the *Poetical Address to Mr. William Tytler* as Burns's worst lines:—

"Tho' something like moisture conglobes in my eye,
Let no one misdeem me disloyal".

"Conglobe" was not Burns's own coinage, but was a word used by Pope.

He reached the Mauchline district early in June, and doubtless he felt triumph as well as delight when he rejoined his family, his fame now established, his worldly prospects so different from what they were a few short months ago. How he would be received by his own relatives could, of course, never have given him any doubts; but it was different in the case of strangers, and his feelings are laid bare by himself. "I have never", he says, "thought mankind capable of anything very generous, but the stateliness of the patricians of Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren (who, perhaps, formerly eyed me askance) since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species." "If anything", he further says, "had been wanting to disgust me completely at Armour's family, their mean servile compliance would have done it." Nevertheless, matters were made up; Jean fell under the same baleful fascination as before; Burns again took advantage of her weakness, though he was now, as he says, "an old hawk at the sport", his heart "no more glowed with feverish rapture", and he had "no paradisiacal evening interviews". About this time he made a short excursion in the West Highlands, visiting Inveraray, Arrochar, and Dumbarton, and getting a tumble with his old mare "Jenny Geddes" upon Loch Lomond side. A memento of his visit to Inveraray exists in a well-known epigram anything but complimentary to the place and people.

We soon find him trying to make a fresh start in life, farming or the excise being the occupations chiefly in his mind, though he had not altogether given up the idea of having to go to Jamaica. Mr. Miller of Dalswinton, who, as we have seen, had befriended him in Edinburgh, offered him one of the farms on his estate in Dumfriesshire, and accordingly Burns visited the locality and had good hopes of being able to select a holding that would be suitable, while he was also "quite charmed with Dumfries folks". In writing to his prospective landlord he says: "I want to be a farmer in a small farm, about a plough-gang, in a pleasant country, under the auspices of a good landlord. I have no foolish notion of being a tenant on easier terms than another. To find a farm where one can live at all is not easy — I only mean, living soberly, like an old-style farmer, and joining personal industry." For a time, however, he continued to be,

as he describes himself, "just as usual, a rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless, idle fellow".

By the middle of August (1787) he was back in Edinburgh, and towards the end of the month set out on a tour in the Central Highlands and north-east of Scotland.[1] He had as travelling companion on this occasion William Nicol, already mentioned, one of the masters of the Edinburgh High School, with whom he had become very intimate. Nicol was a man of ability, but ill-tempered, narrow-minded, pedantic, and harsh or even brutal with his pupils. He was a great admirer of Burns, and proud to associate with him in the way of conviviality and otherwise, though apparently he had little genuine wit or humour in his own composition. He was the "Willie" of Burns's grand drinking song, "O Willie brew'd a peck o' maut", and for this, if for nothing else, he deserves to be held in remembrance—though he also gave Burns good advice on occasion. Lockhart (whose father-in-law, Sir Walter Scott, was a pupil in Nicol's time) considered him "a most dangerous associate" for the poet, since "with a warm heart, the man united a fierce irascible temper, a scorn of many of the decencies of life, a noisy contempt of religion, at least of the religious institutions of his country, and a violent propensity for the bottle".

Hiring a chaise, and starting on 25th August, the travellers went by way of Linlithgow, Falkirk, Larbert, and the field of Bannockburn, to Stirling, the poet's patriotic feelings being naturally all aflame at the scene of the great victory, afterwards to be celebrated in "Scots wha hae". At Stirling, with the diamond that he commonly carried, he scratched a disloyal epigram on a window-pane—"Here Stuarts once in glory reign'd",—a pleasantry that brought him no small annoyance, and that he himself acknowledged to have been an imprudence. From Stirling, Burns

[1] From Robert Chambers we get the following information. "During this very month, while preparing for a tour amongst the nobles of the land, he was assailed with a repetition of the legal proceedings which had sent him into hiding a twelvemonth before, though regarding a different person—a fact substantiated beyond doubt by a document dated the 15th of August, liberating him from the restraints of a writ of *in meditatione fugæ*. This document he had himself preserved, and probably carried about with him. . . . Most characteristically, it contains, scribbled with pencil in his own hand, a couple of verses of an old indecorously comical song". We know nothing more of this person. Possibly she may have been the "Highland wench in the Cowgate" that Burns afterwards declared to his friend, George Thomson, bore him "three bastards at a birth".

paid a visit to relatives of his Ayrshire friend, Gavin Hamilton, at Harvieston, near Dollar, and for the first time saw the fine scenery of the River Devon in the neighbourhood. He next went by way of Crieff, Taymouth, Aberfeldy, Dunkeld, &c., to Blair Athole. Taymouth gave origin to the poetic fragment "Admiring Nature in her wildest grace"; while Aberfeldy, or rather the adjacent falls of Moness, produced the fine song—*The Birks of Aberfeldy*. The poet was entertained in the most friendly manner at Blair Castle, the seat of the Duke of Athole. Here he met, among others, Mr. Graham of Fintry,[1] who henceforth was one of his best friends and patrons. After leaving Blair he went to see the beautiful Falls of Bruar, which drew from him the piece entitled *The Humble Petition of Bruar Water to the Noble Duke of Athole*, intended partly as a poetical acknowledgment of the kindness he had met with at the hands of the ducal family. He then crossed the wild tract of country between Blair and Inverness, now traversed by the Highland Railway, and after visiting Fort George, Inverness, the picturesque Falls of Foyers, Culloden Moor, Forres, Elgin, and other more or less interesting places, arrived at Gordon Castle in the valley of the Spey, several miles above its mouth (7th September). Here he was delighted with the way in which the Duke and Duchess of Gordon received him, but had to hurry away owing to the offended dignity of his fellow traveller, who had been meantime left at a neighbouring inn, and in high wrath and indignation had already ordered the horses to be put to. The Falls of Foyers Burns celebrated by a poem written on the spot —"Among the heathy hills and ragged woods"; the hospitality he had received at Gordon Castle was acknowledged by the stanzas beginning "Streams that glide in orient plains". Pursuing his way by the coast towns, Cullen, Banff, Peterhead, and Aberdeen[2], he reached Stonehaven, in the district to which his

[1] Mr. Robert Graham of Fintry, an estate near Dundee, was a gentleman of position and influence, a member of the Board of Excise. In January, 1788, the poet sought his assistance in order to gain admission to the excise, prefacing his letter with the words: "When I had the honour of being introduced to you at Athole House, I did not think so soon of asking a favour of you".

[2] At Aberdeen he met Bishop Skinner, son of the better known Rev. John Skinner (1721–1807), author of two famous Scottish songs—*Tullochgorum* and *The Ewie wi' the Crooked Horn*—the former called by Burns, in writing to him, "the best Scotch song ever Scotland saw". The poet was disappointed to learn that at Peterhead he had been within two or three miles of Mr.

paternal kin belonged. Here he met by appointment his cousin James Burness, writer, Montrose, and was by him introduced to other relatives. He also took Montrose, Arbroath, Dundee, and Perth on his way southwards, and reached Edinburgh on the 16th September.

In the October following he revisited Harvieston, the residence of his friend Gavin Hamilton's stepmother, a mansion at the foot of the Ochils, a short distance to the west of Dollar. Mrs. Hamilton here kept house for her brother-in-law, Mr. John Tait (grandfather of the late Archbishop Tait), whose deceased wife was her sister; and the family included Charlotte Hamilton, Gavin's half-sister, then on the verge of womanhood, and frequently also Margaret Chalmers, niece to Mrs. Hamilton, a young lady whom Burns had met in Edinburgh at the house of Dr. Blacklock. Burns became exceedingly friendly with Miss Hamilton and Miss Chalmers, and the latter received from him a number of letters which are among the most interesting that he wrote. "Indeed," says Lockhart, "with the exception of his letters to Mrs. Dunlop, there is perhaps no part of his correspondence which may be quoted so uniformly to his honour." It has been stated on good authority—though the statement seems improbable—that the poet made a formal offer of marriage to Miss "Peggy" Chalmers, but that the offer was declined on the plea of her pre-engagement to Mr. Louis Hay, a gentleman connected with an Edinburgh bank (Forbes & Co.), whom she soon after married. Her charms are celebrated in at least two of Burns's lyrics, "My Peggy's face, my Peggy's form", and "Where braving angry winter's storms". Charlotte Hamilton is referred to in the song, "How pleasant the banks of the clear winding Devon".

On this excursion the poet had as travelling companion a Dr. Adair who through Burns made the acquaintance of his future wife, Charlotte Hamilton. From Edinburgh they went by Linlithgow and Carron to Stirling. The poet was forcibly struck with the famous Carron ironworks; the place and its

Skinner's dwelling, at a place called Longside, where Mr. Skinner ministered to an Episcopal congregation for sixty-five years. The genial parson sent him a poetical epistle, which the poet suitably acknowledged, but in plain prose. Mr. Skinner was a scholar and divine, a fluent writer of Latin verse, as well as a vernacular poet. One achievement of his was to turn the old Scottish poem *Christ's Kirk on the Green* into Latin elegiacs.

denizens, as Dr. Adair tells, recalling to him the lurid workshop of the Cyclops. At Stirling the poet took advantage of the occasion to destroy his offensive epigram by smashing the pane of glass on which it was written. "During a residence of about ten days", says Dr. Adair, "we made excursions to visit various parts of the surrounding scenery, inferior to none in Scotland in beauty, sublimity, and romantic interest; particularly Castle Campbell, the ancient seat of the family of Argyle, the famous cataract of the Devon, called the Caldron Linn; and the Rumbling Bridge, a single broad arch, thrown by the Devil, if tradition is to be believed, across the river, at about the height of a hundred feet above its bed. I am surprised that none of these scenes should have called forth an exertion of Burns's muse. But I doubt if he had much taste for the picturesque. I well remember that the ladies at Harvieston, who accompanied us on this jaunt, expressed their disappointment at his not expressing in more glowing and fervid language his impressions of the Caldron Linn scene, certainly highly sublime and somewhat horrible." Dr. Adair's conclusion regarding Burns's lack of a taste for the picturesque is hardly warranted; we know, on the contrary, that —to quote the words of Dugald Stewart already quoted—"he was passionately fond of the beauties of nature"; and that the scenery about Blair Athole inspired him with feelings described as "intense";[1] but it was hardly reasonable to expect from him a poem on every romantic scene; and Lockhart suggests that perhaps "he did not choose to be ecstatic for the benefit of a company of young ladies". It has, however, been remarked by several critics that he seems to have had little admiration for, or interest in, mountain scenery. But this was common with writers of his century, whose favourite epithet for mountains was "horrid", and who, as a rule, feared rather than admired them.

Two other rather interesting visits were made by Burns on this same occasion—one to Ochtertyre, or Auchtertyre, a small estate on the River Teith, a few miles from Stirling, the other to a better known Ochtertyre near Crieff. The former was the charming retreat of Mr. John Ramsay, an old Scottish scholar and antiquary, an amiable but somewhat eccentric man, whose conversation, we are told, "must have delighted any man of

[1] See note to the poem *The Humble Petition of Bruar Water.*

letters", and certainly delighted Burns, the delight being alike on both sides. "I have been in the company of many men of genius, some of them poets," wrote Mr. Ramsay, who at a later period visited the poet then farming in Dumfriesshire, "but I never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him, the impulse of the moment, sparks of celestial fire. I never was more delighted, therefore, than with his company two days *tête-à-tête*." These two days were apparently spent on the poet's return journey from the other Ochtertyre, though he had called on Mr. Ramsay on his way thither also.[1]

Ramsay's description of Burns's conversation agrees with all we read regarding it, yet it seems a little singular that so very few or notable samples of it have come down to us. Ramsay, indeed, does give us one which must have struck him as worth remembering. "When I asked him", he says, "whether the Edinburgh *literati* had mended his poems by their criticisms—'Sir,' said he, 'those gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my country, who spin their thread so fine, that it is neither fit for weft nor woof'."[2] It is perhaps our loss that Burns had no one to act as his Boswell; yet, as Lockhart and others tell us, many of his most humorous or witty sallies would hardly bear repetition in print. And humour was surely more his forte than wit proper, as his printed epigrams sufficiently attest.

The Ochtertyre near Crieff was the residence of Sir William Murray, whose descendants have continued to reside there, and whom Burns had met at the Duke of Athole's. Here he spent some days with great satisfaction to himself—"neither oppressed by ceremony nor mortified by neglect", to quote his own words. Robert Chambers suggests that he may have wished to cultivate Sir William's acquaintance with the view of getting his influence to help him forward in life. A visit to Loch Turret or Turit, a lakelet among the wild hills behind Ochtertyre, inspired

[1] The MSS. left by Mr. Ramsay (who was born in 1736 and died in 1814) furnished materials for an interesting and valuable work in two stout volumes, published in 1888 (Blackwood & Sons) under the editorship of Mr. Alexander Allardyce, and entitled *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*. In it there is only a slight and casual mention of Burns, whose greatness as a poet Mr. Ramsay does not seem to have realized. Sir Walter Scott's inimitable portrait of Monkbarns in *The Antiquary* was partly based on Mr. Ramsay.

[2] This anecdote has been handed down apparently without being subjected to criticism, but surely what Burns said, or meant to have said, was "that it was neither fit for *warp* nor woof"—*woof* and *weft* meaning one and the same thing.

his poem *On Scaring some Water-fowl on Loch Turit*, "the production of a solitary forenoon's walk", as the poet tells us. The song "Blythe, blythe, and merry was she" was also produced at Ochertyre, the subject being Miss Euphemia Murray, a cousin of Sir William.

Burns and Dr. Adair returned to Edinburgh by way of Kinross and Queensferry (20th October, 1787), and for several months the poet lived with his friend Mr. William Cruikshank, a teacher in the High School, the house being in an open, airy situation in the New Town, then a "new town" indeed. His host had a young daughter whose performances on the harpsichord gave the poet much pleasure, and the girl and her instrument also helped him in adapting the words of his songs to their respective airs. At this time he was working busily for the *Scots Musical Museum*, already referred to. Jenny Cruikshank was honoured by being made the subject of two songs: "A rosebud by my early walk", contributed to the *Museum*, and "Beauteous rosebud young and gay".

When Burns returned to Edinburgh he was in hopes that he would soon get a business settlement with Creech, and would then be able to decide on his future course of life—take a farm or apply for admission into the excise. His stay in the capital, however, lasted longer than he anticipated. In November he writes as being "engrossed in dissipation and business", and he was soon to be engrossed in a somewhat famous correspondence, known as the "Clarinda Correspondence", from the pen-name assumed by the lady with whom it was carried on. She belonged to Glasgow, her maiden name was Agnes Craig, by marriage she was Mrs. M'Lehose. She was three months younger than the poet, and had been married at the age of seventeen to a Glasgow lawyer, to whom she bore several children. But the union had not proved happy, and the husband—a man of rather loose morals—was now living on an estate of his in the West Indies, while his wife was living as a grass widow in Edinburgh, in rather narrow circumstances. Dr. Robert Chambers, who knew her at a later period, describes her as follows: "Of a somewhat voluptuous style of beauty, of lively and easy manners, of a poetical fabric of mind, with some wit, and not too high a degree of refinement and

delicacy, she was exactly the kind of woman to fascinate Burns. She might indeed be described as the town-bred or lady analogue of the country maidens who had exercised the greatest power over him in his earlier days." She could turn out "a copy of verses", not without merit, and was the inspirer—or at least the recipient—of some of Burns's finest songs. Two songs by her, trimmed a little by Burns, were inserted in the *Musical Museum*.

The twain first met at tea in a friend's house early in December (1787), the lady having long been eager to make the bard's acquaintance. Letters and verses immediately began to pass between them, but no further meeting could take place for some six weeks, Burns being confined to the house by an accident to his knee. Meantime she had become *Clarinda* and he *Sylvander*, Burns declaring, "I like the idea of Arcadian names in a commerce of this kind". The letters take up in turn such themes as poetry, morality, religion, friendship, "sensibility", love—love and religion being chiefly discussed, and sometimes coming into conjunction with a rather disagreeable effect. For Burns soon becomes the fully declared lover, with all the lover's raptures. Clarinda is his "dear angel", whom he loves "to madness" and will love for ever; and naturally, when he was able to be afoot again, the love-making was not carried on by letter alone. "What luxury of bliss I was enjoying this time yesternight! My ever-dearest Clarinda, you have stolen away my soul; but you have refined, you have exalted it; you have given it a stronger sense of virtue, and a stronger relish for piety." "I have just been before the throne of my God, Clarinda; according to my association of ideas, my sentiments of love and friendship, I next devote myself to you. Yesternight I was happy—'happiness that the world cannot give'—I kindle at the recollection; but it is a flame where 'Innocence looks smiling on', and Honour stands by, a sacred guard." It seems reasonable to believe that their rapturous love-making did not—to use Clarinda's words—"lead beyond the limits of virtue"; but it gave the lady cause for a good deal of heart-searching, as is clear from several of her letters. In one she says: "Is it not too near an infringement of the sacred obligations of marriage to bestow one's heart, wishes, and

thoughts upon another? Something in my soul whispers that it approaches criminality." Burns, of course, had no hesitation in assuring her that she was not under the least shadow of an obligation to bestow her love on Mr. M'Lehose; but her intimacy with the poet caused gossip, and probably calumny, and cost her the loss of one or more friends. The meetings between the lovers were for a time interrupted by a visit of Sylvander to Ayrshire and Dumfriesshire, but the letters were continued till his return to Edinburgh and after. The last to be signed "Sylvander" was written on 21st March, 1788, and was as rapturous as ever. The poet was now looking forward to his speedy departure to enter on a farm in Dumfriesshire, but was to keep up a correspondence by letter, and was to love Clarinda "to death, through death, and for ever".

In regard to his return to farming, Burns certainly did not act rashly. He weighed the matter well, took counsel with friends, visited Dumfriesshire in company with an old experienced farmer of his own neighbourhood to inspect the farms on his future landlord's estate, hesitated long between farming and a post in the excise, and at last determined upon both—the latter as a stand-by in case the former should fail him. The West Indies even were not yet out of his thoughts; for, writing to Clarinda from Mossgiel (Feb. 23, 1788), he says: "I set off to-morrow for Dumfriesshire. 'Tis merely out of compliment to Mr. Miller; for I know the Indies must be my lot." However, on March 14th, he writes to Miss Chalmers (after returning to Edinburgh): "Yesternight, I completed a bargain with Mr. Miller of Dalswinton[1] for the farm of Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith between five and six miles above Dumfries. I begin at Whit-Sunday to build a house, drive lime, &c.; and Heaven be my help! for it will take a strong effort to bring my mind into the routine of business." Of his doubts in respect to his aptitude for business he speaks in a similar strain to more than one correspondent about this time. To Richard Brown, for instance, he says: "I have got so vicious a bent to idleness, and have ever

[1] Mr. Patrick Miller, a native of Glasgow (1731–1815), had been a merchant and banker in Edinburgh, and purchased the estate of Dalswinton in 1785. His name is widely known in the history of steam navigation, he having made (about this very time) among the earliest, and by no means least successful, experiments with vessels propelled by steam paddles.

been so little a man of business, that it will take no ordinary effort to bring my mind properly into the routine"; so also writing to an Edinburgh friend, Mr. Wm. Dunbar, Writer to the Signet: "My late scenes of idleness and dissipation have enervated my mind to an alarming degree". Before finally leaving Edinburgh he was formally accepted as an officer of the excise and got his commission as such, and he received the necessary instructions soon after in Ayrshire. Some time before the matter was settled he had to wait, as he tells Clarinda, "on a great person", and the interview was decidedly galling. "I have been questioned like a child", he says, "about my matters, and blamed and schooled for my Inscription on Stirling window. Come, Clarinda! 'Come curse me Jacob; come, defy me Israel'." His friend Mr. Graham of Fintry no doubt lent his influence towards getting Burns this position; who "the great man" referred to was we do not know.

Burns finally left Edinburgh towards the end of March (1788), and up till about the middle of June, when he went to farm in Dumfriesshire, was at Mauchline (or Mossgiel). In his new position one can easily understand that he had need of a wife to attend to his domestic affairs; but did not his entanglement with Clarinda stand in the way? How was this to be got over, even although marriage with her was for the present impossible? The amorous pair, it seems, had an understanding that they were to wait until fate should prove kinder to them, and till Mr. M'Lehose should conveniently depart this life and leave his wife free to marry Burns. This understanding did not long fetter Burns, whose saying about "the best laid schemes o' mice an' men" may perhaps be worth recalling here.

Nothing has been said of Jean Armour meanwhile, but when he was at Mossgiel in February Burns visited her, and, the glamour of Clarinda being still on him, he wrote to the latter as follows: "Now for a little news that will please you: I this morning as I came home called for a certain woman.—I am disgusted with her—I cannot endure her! I, while my heart smote me for the profanity, tried to compare her with my Clarinda; 'twas setting the expiring glimmer of a farthing taper beside the cloudless glory of the meridian sun. I have done with her and she with me." The "certain woman" was Jean Armour, who at

this time was expecting to bring into the world within a week or two the fruits of her renewed intimacy with Burns, and who some eight or ten weeks later became the poet's wife, and inspired him to write "Of a' the airts the wind can blaw". To his friend Robert Ainslie he writes of this visit to Jean in a seemingly careless, jocular vein. "Jean I found banished, like a martyr —forlorn, destitute, and friendless: all for the good old cause: I have reconciled her to her fate: I have reconciled her to her mother: I have taken her a room. . . . But—as I always am on every occasion—I have been prudent and cautious to an astounding degree; I swore her privately and solemnly, never to attempt any claim on me as a husband, even though anybody should persuade her she had such a claim, which she had not, neither during my life nor after my death." Jean apparently had at that time little chance indeed of being made Mrs. Burns; yet within a few short weeks, some time in April, the poet gave her in a private manner what (in a letter to his friend James Smith) he calls "a matrimonial title to my corpus", and he soon speaks of her to his friends as Mrs. Burns. Before this time, namely in March, she had given birth to twin daughters, who died in a few days. As he tells a correspondent, she had had four children to him in seventeen months. The only one that grew up was Robert, who was at this time with the Mossgiel family. Burns himself seemed to think it necessary to give to his friends reasons or explanations for marrying Jean, and in several of his letters are passages similar to the following: "On my return to Ayrshire, I found a much-loved female's positive happiness or absolute misery among my hands, and I could not trifle with such a sacred deposit". His friend and patroness Mrs. Dunlop seems to have heard of the marriage indirectly some time after it took place. It was formally confirmed on August 5, 1788, when Burns and his wife appeared before the Kirk-session; and the record bears that "they both acknowledged their irregular marriage and their sorrow for that irregularity", and the Session rebuked them accordingly. On such occasions a fine could be claimed from delinquents for the benefit of the poor; and the sum being referred to the poet's own generosity, "Mr. Burns", we are told, "gave a guinea-note for behoof of the poor".

Most people will probably think that Burns acted rightly in

marrying Jean Armour, yet naturally enough the marriage caused a breach between him and Mrs. M'Lehose, and the "Clarinda Correspondence" was abruptly broken off, never to be resumed on quite the old footing, though a few letters did pass between the pair during the next half-dozen years. From a letter of Burns's, dated March 9, 1789, in answer to one from the lady, it appears she had applied to him the epithet "villain" and had accused him of "perfidious treachery". Burns defended himself on the plea of "omnipotent necessity", declared that he had not felt bound by the smallest moral tie to Mrs. Burns, though ready to admit "high imprudence and egregious folly". In February, 1790, he sent Clarinda the famous Highland Mary song—"Thou ling'ring star",—and in August of next year the songs: "Sensibility, how charming", and "Now Nature hangs her mantle green". Two or three months later she wrote him a distinctly cold admonitory letter, to draw his attention to a humble Edinburgh girl who had had a child to him, and was now in want and dying. The poet's reply was that he would almost immediately be in town, and would see what could be done for the girl's relief. He spent over a week in Edinburgh, was allowed by Clarinda to call on her, and a tender parting interview took place on the 6th December (1791), Clarinda having then agreed to join her husband in the West Indies. Burns resumed the correspondence with eagerness. Before the end of the year "the first of women, my ever-beloved, my ever-sacred Clarinda", is the recipient of the famous—and justly famous—"Ae fond kiss and then we sever", and "Ance mair I hail thee, thou gloomy December"; together with "Behold the hour the boat arrive! My Dearest Nancy, O farewell". Oddly enough the last is little better than an extract from a long poem that appeared in 1774 in the old *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, adapted to meet new circumstances, "Nancy" being now on the point of leaving Scotland, doubtful if she might ever return. Before setting sail she wrote Burns an affectionate letter dated January 25, 1792—the anniversary of his birth—"as the last advice of her who could have lived and died for you". It urges upon him, above all, the importance of religion and holiness, cautions him against scoffing at sacred things, and is an interesting and even an affecting document. She soon returned, disappointed, from the West

Indies, having found, it is said, her unworthy husband with a family of young half-breeds about him. The next letter to her that we possess, written in March, 1793, is a rhapsodical effusion telling of "agony", "frenzy", "ruined peace", "frantic disappointed passion", "a broken heart"! Extravagant as it is, the author evidently set some store by it (we know that he rather prided himself on being an adept at a *billet doux*), since he copied it into what is known as the "Glenriddell Collection" of his manuscript letters. At the end Burns himself appends the surprising comment: "I need scarcely remark that the foregoing was the fustian rant of enthusiastic youth". "Fustian rant" may describe the letter well enough, but when Burns wrote it he was thirty-four years old and complaining to some friends of already feeling symptoms of approaching old age. The final letter of the series (25th June, 1794) is more rational, but is in its own way singular enough, since the poet enclosed in it—for the perusal of her who was still "my ever dearest Clarinda!"—a piece that he lived to regret the writing of, namely the unmanly *Monody on a Lady famed for her Caprice.*

The Clarinda episode thus shows Burns in several peculiar lights. Notwithstanding all his vows and protestations it is not possible to believe that he was ever deeply and seriously in love with Mrs. M'Lehose, though evidently she was serious enough, and did not come out of the business heart-whole. The world-renowned "Ae fond kiss and then we sever", "Had we never lov'd sae kindly", &c.—written when the poet had been a married man for several years—owed the fervour and epigrammatic point they possess more to Burns the literary artist than to Burns the lover. Indeed, as before suggested, it is extremely doubtful if Burns's heart was ever entirely given to any woman, though he must always have one (or more) in his eye as the object of poetic raptures, and never had any difficulty "in battering himself into a passion"—to quote his own phrase. On the whole, Clarinda has more of our sympathy in this affair than Sylvander, whose letters indeed seem sometimes to show but scant respect for her intelligence. Robert Chambers suggested, with some probability, that "there was a *kind* of earnestness in Sylvander's flame for Clarinda—a kind involving a good deal of self-delusion mingled with some reality—a genuine partiality augmented to affected

raptures by a good-natured desire to meet the wishes of one who evidently desired to be strongly loved because she herself was much in love". Mrs. M'Lehose long outlived the poet, dying in 1841, and to the last retaining fond remembrances of Burns. One cannot but regret that, during his enforced leisure in Edinburgh, instead of philandering with Clarinda, he did not employ his genius in adding to the poetic treasures contained in his first two editions.

Burns entered on the farm of Ellisland—a farm of 170 acres—on the 13th June, 1788. The lease was to run for four terms of nineteen years each, the rent for the first three years being £50 annually, afterwards £70; and the landlord was to give his tenant £300 to build a new dwelling-house and offices. The place was more picturesque than productive; it was in very poor order, and would have required much hard work to bring it into proper condition. How much money of his own the poet possessed at the start we do not know. He had had a partial settlement with his publisher Creech, and had recently received from him the hundred guineas for the copyright of his poems; but he had advanced or lent his brother Gilbert £180 to help him with Mossgiel. Burns himself disclaimed any generosity in regard to this transaction, and of course he was equally bound with his brother to support and keep together the family at Mossgiel—including old Mrs. Burns and her younger children, with the poet's own illegitimate daughter, "sonsy, smirking, dear-bought Bess". The Burns brothers and sisters, we may here remark, were loyal and affectionate towards each other, and the poet's letters to his young brother William, whom he also assisted with money (and who died in early manhood), show him in a pleasant light.

The chief drawback to Ellisland at first was the want of a proper abode, and for some time the poet lived as a bachelor in a hovel, while the new dwelling-house was being built. Jean did not come to Ellisland till near the end of the year, and before this her husband had to do a good deal of riding to and fro between Dumfriesshire and Ayrshire. Meanwhile, in order to fit her the better for a farmer's wife, she was "regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business". Even when Mrs. Burns did join her husband, early in December, the new house was not ready, and

the pair began housekeeping at a place called The Isle, only occupying their own proper house some time in the summer of 1789. In view of his settling down as a married man, Burns had bought a large family Bible, and by way of bringing good luck to the household, the servant girl led the way into the new home carrying this volume and a bowl of salt, while the poet followed with his wife on his arm, according to good and established custom. Soon after Mrs. Burns became the mother of a son (Francis Wallace), the first of Burns's children born in wedlock.

In marrying Jean Armour and returning to farming, Burns—notwithstanding some misgivings in regard to the success of the latter venture—was well pleased with himself and his prospects. This is attested by several poems belonging to the earlier and happier period of his Ellisland life, more especially, "Of a' the airts the wind can blaw", "O, were I on Parnassus' hill", and "I hae a wife o' my ain". But the discomforts of his stay in the hovel above referred to drew from him a piece in a somewhat different strain, the *Epistle to Hugh Parker*; and by September (1789) he was so doubtful of the success of his new farm that he wrote to Mr. Graham of Fintry enclosing a poetical epistle (to which several others were afterwards added), and asking his influence in order that he might be appointed officer of the excise division in which Ellisland was situated, or else at Dumfries, so that he might combine excise work with farming as soon as he pleased. This application, in due time, had a successful result. Two famous songs belong to the latter part of this year—*Auld Lang Syne* and *Go, Fetch to me a Pint o' Wine*. Others followed as Burns continued his contributions to the *Museum*.

At first he felt the want of society in Dumfriesshire, and described the people around him as finished specimens of hypocrisy and canting, with "as much an idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet". But he soon felt at home, and to quote Lockhart, "his company was courted eagerly, not only by his brother farmers, but by the neighbouring gentry of all classes; and now, too, for the first time he began to be visited continually in his own house by curious travellers of all sorts, who did not consider, any more than the generous poet himself, that an extensive practice of hospitality must have cost more time than he ought to have had, and far more money than he ever had, at his disposal". "On hospi-

table thoughts intent", we find him, after settling at Ellisland, providing himself with a cask of whisky, which was distilled by his old friend, John Tennant, and gave all satisfaction in regard to taste and strength. John Tennant was brother of another friend, James Tennant, who figures in the poet's works as the recipient of an excellent rhyming *Epistle*.

With his own landlord he did not become particularly intimate, but he was soon on the most friendly terms with his near neighbour, Robert Riddell, owner of the estate of Friars' Carse, a gentleman a year or two older than himself, who was a good deal of an antiquarian, something of a musician and composer, and interested in literature. To his friendship with Mr. Riddell we owe the *Verses written in Friars' Carse Hermitage*, the song, *The Day Returns*, *On Glenriddell's Fox breaking its Chain*, and, above all, *The Whistle*, this last celebrating a grand drinking match at Friars' Carse, in which Riddell was one of the competitors. Mr. Riddell composed tunes for *The Whistle*, for the song just mentioned, and for one or two others. Burns assisted him in starting and managing a local circulating library, and put himself to a good deal of trouble in the matter. An account of this library is given in a letter from the poet's own pen, sent by Mr. Riddell to Sir John Sinclair, and by him published in the famous *Statistical Account of Scotland*, in connection with the article on the parish of Dunscore. Burns has left on record that at the fireside of Mr. and Mrs. Riddell he "enjoyed more pleasant evenings than at all the houses of fashionable people in the country put together; and to their kindness and hospitality I am indebted for many of the happiest hours of my life".[1]

It was at Friars' Carse that he met Captain Grose, to whose *Antiquities of Scotland*, *Tam o' Shanter* was contributed, being inserted in connection with an engraving of Alloway Kirk. This famous piece, which was based on a legend well known to Burns, was quaintly described by the Captain as a "pretty tale". It is a pity that Burns did not give us other "pretty tales" of a like stamp. This, perhaps, was too much to expect, and *Tam*

[1] The mansion house of Friars' Carse has seen great changes since the half-dozen years that it called Mr. Riddell its owner. Previous to 1909 it was for some time a branch of the Crichton Royal Institution, Dumfries, an establishment for insane patients. The property was sold by Mr. Riddell's trustees soon after his death.

o' Shanter was undoubtedly the culminating effort of his genius. It was also the last piece of any length that he wrote—nothing indeed to equal it and earlier pieces in importance from this time came from his pen, though, of course, he produced a number of excellent songs. The poet himself ranked it first of all his works, and his judgment has been supported by the general voice of criticism; but he was not always a sound critic of his own poems, sometimes what he took for gold had a considerable alloy of baser metal. There is, of course, no need to insist on the absolute superiority of any one piece—much allowance must be made for individual tastes. Many would probably place *Halloween* or *The Cotter's Saturday Night* before *Tam o' Shanter*, which Carlyle thought inferior to the *Jolly Beggars*, calling it, "not so much a true poem as a piece of sparkling rhetoric". Some again may consider that the *Cotter* has features allying it rather too closely with what has latterly been designated as the "Kailyard School".

The composition of *Tam o' Shanter*, which dates from the autumn of 1790, illustrates what Burns describes as a common practice with him: to strike off a poem at a heat, and then proceed to polish it—"easy composition and laborious correction". The first draught or rough sketch of *Tam* is said to have been the work of a single autumn day, but it was not finished till near the end of the following January.

About the period of its composition he had, for some time, thoughts of doing something in the way of drama. What he had in his mind was a drama on a Scottish subject. Possibly the knowledge that Allan Ramsay had been so successful with his *Gentle Shepherd* may have suggested to him the writing of a drama, but nothing came of this project. In connection with it we find him instructing (in March, 1790) his friend, Mr. Hill, an Edinburgh bookseller, to pick up for him, as opportunity occurred, secondhand or cheap copies of the chief British dramatists, and expressing a wish, also, to have the works of Molière, Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire. We may here add that Burns —so far as his means permitted—spent a good deal on books, and acquired a fair-sized library of a very miscellaneous character.

Among the poems—apart from songs—belonging to the Ellisland period (which came to an end in 1791), in addition to *Tam o' Shanter*, *The Whistle*, and the epistle *To James Tennant*, already

referred to, we may mention, *On Seeing a Wounded Hare*, *The Kirk's Alarm*, *Capt. Grose's Peregrinations*, the election ballad of *The Five Carlins*, *Elegy on Matthew Henderson*, *Lament of Mary Queen of Scots*, and the poet's *Lament for Glencairn*—"not the fictitious creation of poetic fancy, but the breathings of real love from a bleeding heart". Among the more famous songs of the period are: *Willie brewed a peck o' Maut*, *John Anderson my Jo*, *Tam Glen*, *To Mary in Heaven*, *Yestreen I had a pint o' Wine*, *Bonny Doon*, *Ae Fond Kiss*, and *Afton Water*. Though one or two of the above pieces—so varied in style and subject—owed their inspiration to events of the past, most of them sprang from incidents and feelings very much of the present. The famous bacchanalian song was the outcome of a meeting at Moffat between Burns and his friends, William Nicol and Allan Masterton, both of the Edinburgh High School.

From the latter part of 1789 onwards Burns was in active employment as excise officer in his own district. His division comprised ten parishes, and his duties made it necessary for him to ride about two hundred miles every week. In performing these duties he is said to have been anything but harsh, and to have been especially lenient in the case of petty delinquents who were merely trying to eke out a scanty livelihood—perhaps one can hardly say to turn an honest penny—by evading or infringing the then rather oppressive excise regulations. Writing to his patron, Mr. Graham of Fintry (on 9th December of this year), he says he had found the excise business go much smoother than he had expected, owing to the kindness of his immediate superiors. "Nor do I find my hurried life", he adds, "greatly inimical to my correspondence with the Muses." He enclosed several of his recent pieces, including *To Mary in Heaven*, and the humorous stanzas on Captain Grose, and wrote in excellent spirits. A few days later, however, he writes to Mrs. Dunlop in a very different strain, representing himself as "groaning under the miseries of a diseased nervous system", and as "a diseased wretch, who has impaired more than half of any faculties he possessed". To his brother Gilbert he writes on the 11th January following in an equally despondent tone, anathematizing his farm as a ruinous affair, of which he must get rid as soon as possible—but at the same time giving news of what was doing at the Dumfries theatre,

in which he always took a lively interest. How far Burns brought upon himself some of these miseries cannot be known, but it is certain that in his new vocation he was beset with temptations hard for him to resist, with his temperament, and living at a period when, as Mr. Lockhart says, it was "difficult for the most soberly inclined guest to rise from any man's board in the same trim that he sat down to it."

At the inns he visited he was a special mark for the blandishments of hosts and hostesses, and equally for those of the guests. The Globe Inn at Dumfries came to be a favourite "howff" or resort of his, and here there was a young woman, a niece of the landlady and by name Ann Park, whose "gowden locks" and other physical attractions he has rapturously celebrated in the song "Yestreen I had a pint o' wine". His raptures in her case were by no means merely poetical and Platonic—she had a child to him, a daughter, magnanimously taken charge of and nursed by his wife, along with her own infant son (William Nicol Burns) born ten days later (9th April, 1791). Little seems to have been said or even generally known at the time regarding this affair; and Mrs. Burns perhaps may have adopted the best plan for hushing up the scandal, by giving the infant the position of a twin. Burns thought his song on Anna's "gowden locks" about the best he ever composed, and was ready to have it published in "an *altered* not *amended*" form, admitting that it was "not quite a lady's song" in its original form. In regard to this effusion we can hardly acquit Burns of an obliquity of judgment, moral as well as critical; the song is devoid of all delicacy of sentiment as well as of true poetic fire; it is inspired by mere animalism, and simply glorifies the raptures of illicit love. Ann Park is no more heard of, and is said not to have survived the birth of her child. But the Globe continued to be Burns's howff.

Naturally enough this affair does not appear in Burns's correspondence, but there are expressions in a letter to his friend Mr. Cunningham of Edinburgh (11th June, 1791) that suggest its presence in his mind, especially as the sentiments have hardly any bearing on the subject he is writing about: "My friends—for such the world calls ye, and such ye think yourselves to be—pass by my virtues if you please but do also spare my follies:

the first will witness in my breast for themselves, and the last will give pain enough to the ingenuous mind without you. And since deviating more or less from the paths of propriety and rectitude must be incident to human nature, do thou, Fortune, put it in my power, always from myself and of myself, to bear the consequence of those errors. I do not want to be independent that I may sin, but I want to be independent in my sinning." On the whole the world has been well content to take him with all his sins and shortcomings. If some things done and some things written by Burns cause regret, or even dislike, he possessed too much of what is best in our common human nature for the latter feeling to be long dominant.

Probably many another farmer than Burns could have made a good enough living out of Ellisland, renting it on the same terms. The poet certainly did not give it a fair trial. It would have required more determined effort and closer attention than he had at command; and for some branches of a farmer's business, that of buying and selling for instance, clearly he had—and knew he had—little aptitude. To be sure we hear of him striding across the field with the seed-sheet, holding the stilts of the plough, or binding after his reapers; but his excise duties must have taken him too much away. He would have done better, as he at one time thought of doing, to have let farming alone, deposited his money in a bank, and relied altogether on the excise. In deciding to enter the revenue service he showed sound judgment, though indeed he had few choices open to him.[1] Doubtless the occupation of an exciseman in his day was in some respects no very agreeable one, and the "gauger" was apt to be regarded with rather unfriendly feelings by the looser and more lawless portions of the populace. But Burns, with his influential friends, might look forward to speedy promotion and ere long to the attainment of an assured and comfortable position. As a matter of fact he was soon making progress in this direction. By the time he had been a twelvemonth in the service, Mr. Graham had so far exercised his influence that the poet's promotion to a supervisorship, bringing with it an income that would

[1] About this time it is asserted that he was offered a stated income for weekly contributions to a London newspaper, the *Star*, in which a few of his effusions appeared. Later (1794) it was suggested that he should settle in London as one of the staff of the *Morning Chronicle*.

rise to £200 a year or so, was in view. So bright were his prospects by the latter half of 1790 that his friend William Nicol, writing to Mr. Ainslie, affects to believe that "poor folks" like them must give up all thoughts of keeping up a correspondence with him. In order to show what an excise appointment might have ultimately led to we may here mention that in 1795, in a letter to Mr. Heron, the country gentleman for whom as a candidate for parliament he wrote the "Heron ballads", and who was ready to help him in return, he states that the moment he was appointed supervisor he might be placed on the list of Collectors of Excise; but that the latter appointment, bringing with it an income up to about £1000, was "always a business purely of political patronage". Whether the poet might have had friends powerful enough and willing to place him in this desirable position is perhaps too speculative for discussion; it is clear that he had the best of reasons for being discreet in his public displays of political feeling and for not offending those who could serve his interests. The highest rank to which he actually rose in the excise was that of acting supervisor.

After a disheartening struggle for fully three years with the farm of Ellisland, he at last decided to give it up and rely solely on the excise. So far as his landlord was concerned he found no difficulty in getting rid of Ellisland. Mr. Miller was quite willing to cancel the lease, a neighbour having offered to buy the farm outright for £2000. Burns therefore sold off his crop, and later his farm stock and implements, all of which it seems fetched good prices. The second sale was about Martinmas, 1791. The poet then, with a fair amount of money in his pocket, took up his abode, with his wife and family, his books, and other belongings, in a small house in the town of Dumfries, where he had obtained a new excise appointment. This appointment, as he tells his friend Ainslie, was worth £70 per annum, "down money", and in addition to his fixed salary considerable sums fell to him as perquisites, since he shared in fines and the proceeds of contraband goods confiscated and sold by the revenue authorities. For one year he speaks of expecting £50 or £60. But this source of income was naturally rather precarious. Before settling down he paid his last visit to Edinburgh, already referred to in connection with the Clarinda episode.

The house in which Burns at first lived on removing to Dumfries consisted of three rooms on a first floor, in what was then the "Wee Vennel", and is now Bank Street.[1] Such a change from the open-air life hitherto enjoyed by the family must surely have been a depressing one, and a letter of the poet belonging to this time depicts him as indeed in the blues —"My wife scolds me, my business torments me, and my sins come staring me in the face, everyone telling a more bitter tale than his fellow". This mood would not be of long continuance. After staying eighteen months in the Wee Vennel he removed to a larger and better dwelling, a two-story house in what was then called Millbrae (or Mill Vennel) and is now called Burns Street. This was the house in which he died, and it now attracts many visitors.

In Dumfries Burns was naturally a man of mark, and it was not long before some of his utterances gave him greater prominence than he expected or desired. The events connected with the French revolution were then stirring up in the minds of many an extreme hatred to the movement, and a share of this feeling was only too apt to be bestowed upon others who showed any favour towards it. Of the latter, as is well known, there were not a few throughout the country, and amongst these Burns, for a time at least, ranked himself, as he did among the many who had approved of the result of the American War. This appeared to stamp him as a disloyal subject and an enemy of established order, and thus brought upon him the censure of his superiors in the public service, while it seems also to have temporarily darkened his prospects of professional advancement. In the end of 1792 and early next year he wrote in great consternation to his patron, Mr. Graham, expressing a lively fear that he might lose his situation; warmly defending himself against charges of disloyalty, which had been brought against him "through hellish, groundless envy" he declared; and adjuring Mr. Graham to save him from the misery which threatened to overwhelm him. Mr. Graham did what he could, Mr. Corbet, Supervisor-General, also lent his influence, and the storm blew over. To Mrs. Dunlop also he wrote in violent terms about someone who was plotting his ruin; but we can hardly believe there was much, if any, real ground for such an idea. It seems that Mr. Corbet was instructed

[1] *Vennel* is a Franco-Scottish term for a lane or alley.

to "document" him, as Burns says, "that my business was to act, *not to think*; and that whatever might be men or measures, it was for me to be *silent* and *obedient*"—surely a harsh form of reproof.

One alleged instance of his recklessness in offending the loyal feelings of his fellow townsmen was his refusing to rise and join in the National Anthem when sung in the Dumfries Theatre. Another was in connection with a call for the singing or playing of the republican *Ca Ira* in the theatre. Disloyal toasts were also laid to his charge, and one of these nearly involved him in a duel, and cost him a letter written in somewhat humiliating terms. The actual words were harmless enough: "May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of our cause". He thought, or professed to think, that this was "a toast that the most outrageous frenzy of loyalty cannot object to"; unfortunately at that time there were doubts about his own loyalty. Burns, though always enthusiastic on behalf of Liberty, was not very consistent in his political utterances. Sometimes he professed to have little interest in and little knowledge of politics. For a time, at least, he sported the "blue and buff" as a Whig, but he was no very decided admirer of Charles James Fox. Hearing of such indiscretions, William Nicol wrote him a friendly letter of remonstrance, pertinently asking what it mattered to him whether the Dumfries fiddlers played *Ca Ira* or *God Save the King*, and jocularly recommending to him that "bright model of political conduct" the Vicar of Bray. He was answered by an ironical rhapsody in which the poet affects to regard his mentor as the very acme of wisdom and prudence. By the end of 1794 Burns had been appointed temporarily to act as supervisor, which led him to remark to Mrs. Dunlop that his political sins seemed to have been forgiven.

By and by, when there were threats of invasion by the French, Burns gave the most convincing proofs of his genuine patriotism, by enrolling himself as a volunteer (early in 1795) in one of the two companies raised by Dumfries, and by writing, in his capacity as laureate of the corps, his well-known song *The Dumfries Volunteers*—"Does haughty Gaul invasion threat".[1] This song, which

[1] Burns's change of feeling was similar to that of Wordsworth, when he saw that what at first he sympathized with as a war of defence was becoming a war of conquest on the part of France. Such change of feeling indeed was very common.

was first published in the *Edinburgh Courant* and the *Dumfries Journal* (4th and 5th May), and then in many other papers, is said to have had an excellent effect in helping to stir up the war-like spirit of the populace. The famous "Scots wha hae" or *Bruce's Address to his Army at Bannockburn*, is said to have had a similar effect, and if so the fact is interesting. It was of course written on an earlier and entirely different occasion, about the end of August, 1793 (according to the poet himself), but it was inspired by the kindred subject of liberty, and according to the poet was associated in his mind "with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, *not quite so ancient*", namely the struggles of the French in driving back the enemies of the republic. "Scots wha hae" was among the songs sent by Burns—who described it as "a kind of Scottish ode"—to George Thomson of Edinburgh for insertion in his *Collection of Scottish Melodies*, and was first given to the public, through the newspapers, in 1794. Another song, equally famous, drew part of its inspiration from France, in the days when Liberty, Equality, Fraternity were watchwords of the republicans, and found abundant response in Britain. This was *A man's a man for a' that*, sent to Thomson in January, 1795, and modestly described by the author as not really poetry and not suited for Thomson's book.[1] It was first made public by the newspapers.

Thomson's *Scottish Melodies*, or, as the work was at first entitled, "A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs", was a publication somewhat similar to Johnson's *Museum*, but its aim was to take a higher position, musically and otherwise. Burns had got connected with it in 1792, and he continued to work for both the *Museum* and the *Melodies* at the same time. Its editor and projector—a musical enthusiast—was clerk to the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Art and Manufactures in Scotland, and though not acquainted personally with Burns, he

[1] An old refrain was here wedded to new words. The song would have been none the worse had the *ad captandum* reference to "Yon birkie ca'd a lord" been omitted, considering the almost overstrained terms in which the poet had already acknowledged his indebtedness to Lord Glencairn, and that the nothingness of titles is sufficiently emphasized in the song otherwise. He might also have remembered his lines on meeting Lord Daer, written in so different a spirit, and his connection with the Dukes of Athole and Gordon. We may here advert to the fact that Burns, man of the people as he was, seems to have had a hankering after something of "the boast of heraldry", and we find him devising a coat of arms for himself, and getting it engraved on a seal.

had written to beg his co-operation, which the bard readily granted. "Profit" Mr. Thomson avowed to be "quite a secondary consideration" so far as he was concerned, in connection with the projected work, and he was willing to pay the poet any reasonable price that he should be pleased to ask. Burns entered with enthusiasm on the undertaking, and scouted the idea of taking anything in the way of remuneration, declaring "you may think my songs either *above* or *below* price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other". From this period till within a week of his death he carried on an interesting correspondence with Thomson, sending him, besides numerous songs, a large number of letters—many of them lengthy productions—in which are discussed his own songs and others, and the melodies pertaining thereto. Of the six volumes of which Thomson's publication ultimately consisted Burns lived to see only the first instalment (published in 1793), and comparatively few of his songs made their first appearance in the work, having been otherwise published before its completion. Thomson has been assailed by some for having treated Burns shabbily in not insisting on forcing money on him for his contributions; but no blame seems really to rest on him. He was getting no profit from the work himself, and he certainly paid large sums to his musical collaborators, who included Beethoven, Haydn, Weber, Pleyel, and others.

The poetical output of Burns during his latter years consisted, as already stated, chiefly of songs, and some of his best-known lyrics, mostly sent to Thomson, belong to the closing period of his career. Here may be specified: *Flow gently Sweet Afton*, *The Banks o' Doon*, *Song of Death*, *The Deil's awa wi' the Exciseman*, *My ain kind Dearie*, *Duncan Gray*, *Gala Water*, *Logan Braes*, *The Soldier's Return*, *Wandering Willie*, *My Nannie's Awa'*, *Last May a Braw Wooer*, not to mention others, which may be found in their due chronological sequence in this work.

In one of his letters to Thomson he gives some particulars in regard to his practice when writing a song to a given air—and he seems hardly to have thought of writing a song unless to some already existing air—telling how he must first have full mastery of the melody, how he then thought of sentiments that would be

in harmony with it, and how he gradually built up his lyric, humming over the words and air together. What his musical attainments actually amounted to is not very clear, but he appears latterly to have been able to read the notes of a simple melody, at least. According to a statement in his Commonplace Book, he at one time composed an air "in the old Scotch style" himself; but he adds that it could not see the light, as he was "not musical scholar enough to prick down my tune properly".[1]

In another letter to Thomson Burns declared—no doubt with some humorous exaggeration—that he must have a fine woman to admire as a special source of inspiration in song-writing: "Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song—to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs—do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe. . . . I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman: and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses." And speaking of the song *Craigieburn Wood* he tells him that "the lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland; and in fact (*entre nous*) is in a manner to me what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love". Her name was Jean Lorimer,[2] and she was the daughter of a well-to-do Nithsdale neighbour. She was still quite young, but was married soon after Burns became acquainted with her, having been unfortunately led into a union with a reckless young spendthrift who deserted her. She is best known by the poetic name "Chloris", bestowed upon her by the poet, also as "the lassie wi' the lint-white locks"; and under this

[1] The late Mr. J. C. Dick in his *Notes on Scottish Song by Robert Burns* (1908) asserted on very slight evidence that he played the fiddle. Mr. Dick relied partly on a humorous epistle written by Burns to Charles Sharpe of Hoddam, Dumfriesshire, in the character of JOHNNY FAA; but if this curious production is to be accepted as evidence that the writer, as stated in it, was both "a fiddler and a poet", it may also serve as evidence that he was a wandering ballad-monger, that his mother had been "spouse to a marching regiment", and that he was brought into the world "aboard the packet-boat, somewhere between Donaghadee and Portpatrick". If Burns had played the fiddle we should certainly have heard of it from himself in his correspondence with Thomson or others.

[2] William Lorimer, her father, was a farmer and dealer in excisable commodities, at Kemmishall, near Dumfries, and the Burns and Lorimer families were on intimate terms from 1791. Mrs. Lorimer sometimes took too much drink, and Lorimer was said by Burns himself to be an "illicit dealer", and accused of "the dark manœuvres of a smuggler". He fell into difficulties, and the daughter (who died in 1831) spent many years in poverty.

name was the subject of various lyrics written from 1794 onwards. Yet by and by we find him showing a change either in taste or feelings or both towards his erstwhile charmer—for latterly he declares that he dislikes the name "Chloris" which he had thus made use of in his songs, and he even came to assert that he thought flaxen locks out of keeping with female beauty.

A little before the reign of Chloris began (but some time after making her acquaintance) Burns had become the friend and admirer of another young married lady—one of much higher social status. This was Mrs. Maria Riddell, wife of Walter Riddell of Woodley Park, the brother of the laird of Friars' Carse. The master and mistress of Woodley Park[1] (three miles south-west of Dumfries) had Burns as a very frequent visitor to their hospitable mansion. The lady was not only beautiful, but was clever, well educated, fond of science and literature, and an authoress herself both in prose and verse, though no blue stocking. Wishing to bring out an account of her voyage to Madeira and the West Indies, she applied to Burns for an introduction to his Edinburgh printer, Smellie. The old printer and man of science was charmed with Mrs. Riddell, and surprised at her knowledge and abilities. The result was that the book was taken in hand and duly appeared in 1792, under the title *Voyages to the Madeira and Leeward Caribee Islands; with Sketches of the Natural History of those Islands.* By Maria R——. Smellie, who was well qualified to judge, declared that it showed "science, minute observation, accurate description, and excellent composition". She was the subject of Burns's song "The last time I came o'er the moor", and Burns also wrote an impromptu on her birthday.

The poet's friendship with this accomplished lady was destined to be interrupted (in the beginning of 1794) by an unfortunate incident — some impropriety or act of rudeness which Burns, when he had taken too much liquor, was guilty of towards her and ladies who were her guests, in her own house. He sent her next day a letter of apology full of penitence and remorse, and prayed for forgiveness, but declared that her husband (to

[1] The place was so named in compliment to Mrs. Riddell, whose maiden name was Woodley. As "Goldielea" it had belonged to a Col. Goldie, from whom Walter Riddell bought it, and it was soon in possession of the same gentlemen again. Riddell apparently was something of a spendthrift. He died several years after the poet; his widow, who married a second time, died in 1807 or 1808.

whom he apologized in verse) had insisted on his drinking more than he wished, and also that the other gentlemen were "partakers of my guilt". For a time the lady remained obdurate, and the quarrel broke off Burns's friendly intercourse with Robert Riddell, who sided with his relatives, and died while the estrangement still lasted—a circumstance that added much to the poet's grief. In memory of his deceased friend, Burns wrote an elegiac sonnet which appeared in the local paper along with the announcement of the death (April, 1794). Finding that his apology had failed to soften Mrs. Riddell's resentment or that of her husband, the poet was not long in regarding himself as the injured party, and in this mood penned what he himself describes as "several ill-natured things", including the *Monody on a Lady famed for her Caprice*, the *Epistle from Esopus to Maria*, and a savage epigram on her husband. In sending a copy of the *Monody* to Clarinda he even accused Mrs. Riddell of being guilty of "scandalous conduct" towards him and two or three other gentlemen. It must be admitted that when Burns took offence —which he was not slow to do—he was ready to attack either man or woman. And he did not even spare the dead, as witness his Ode on Mrs. Oswald, whose "funeral pageantry" had brought on him some personal discomfort. Such outbursts, however, are not to be set down to any deep-seated vindictiveness; rather to the proverbial touchiness of the *genus irritabile vatum*.[1] Before the end of the year there was relenting on the part of Mrs. Riddell, who again met and corresponded with Burns, sending him poems of her own for his criticism, and receiving pieces by him in return. A memorable interview took place between her and the poet within a short time of his death.

The Dumfries of Burns's time seems to have been a place of much sociality and conviviality. It was a sort of local metropolis, was the residence of many well-to-do people, and attracted many others. In one of his letters Burns calls it "the third town for importance and elegance in Scotland". The frequenting of taverns was then, of course, thought nothing of, and in those

[1] A stronger feeling than this, however, may be admitted to have swayed him in one case at least, that of Dean of Faculty Dundas (also Lord Advocate and M.P.), whom he took a chance of attacking in 1796 for a slight that had rankled in his mind since 1787, viz. that of taking no notice of the poet's elegy on the death of Dundas's father.

easy-going times a sitting in a tavern was often prolonged till "some wee short hour ayont the twal", and even far into next morning. But it is clear the poet was too ready to succumb to the temptations that beset him, and in these taverns to partake of hospitalities with associates unworthy of his company, and thus was led into other evil courses. To what degree his excesses actually went has been disputed. There is no need to dwell on the question, but Robert Chambers after giving much attention to the subject—and from his searching and continued investigations he acquired a greater knowledge of the facts of Burns's life than any other of his biographers—came to what seems a perfectly legitimate conclusion, if due weight is to be given to contemporary evidence: "That our bard spent *too many evenings* in this way for the comfort of his family, for his own health and peace of mind, and for the preservation of his dignity as a man and a poet, I believe to be only too true. Nor was this all, for that co-ordinate debasement to which Dr. Currie [with other biographers] alludes was not escaped. . . . Yet he never reached or even approached that point where a respect for external decency is lost."

On the whole Dumfries society seems to have treated his failings with tenderness, and looked on them with regret rather than with severity. In 1787 he had been made an honorary burgess of the town, and in 1793 he applied to the magistrates—and of course with success—to be put on the footing of a real freeman of the town in the schools, so that his children, and particularly his eldest, Robert, now seven years old, might obtain education on easy terms. We do hear, however, of coldness on the part of one or two of his old friends (Ainslie, for instance), and of his feeling sore at being looked askance upon by fellow townsmen who were previously willing enough to enjoy his society; and his old friend and correspondent, Mrs. Dunlop, for some cause or other ceased writing to him for about a year and a half before his death (though she wrote to ask his brother Gilbert about him when she heard of his serious illness). His excise duties continued to be performed to the satisfaction of his superiors, and sometimes gave him interesting experiences. One such (in the year 1792) was associated with the spirited and humorous song, *The Deil's awa wi' the Exciseman*, written, it is

said, when the poet was watching an armed smuggling brig, to prevent landing or escape, and waiting for the assistance of a force of dragoons, which in time came and enabled her capture to be effected.[1]

Among his brethren of the excise, Burns had several good friends. One of these was John Lewars, whose sister was a ministering angel to him in his last days. Another was Alexander Findlater, who was his immediate superior all the time he was in the service, and after his death, in a published statement, bore witness to the zealous and efficient manner in which the poet performed his excise duties. A third was Collector Mitchell, "friend of the poet, tried and leal", who in a rhyming epistle beginning with these words was asked by Burns for the loan of a guinea—an epistle humorous, yet coloured with graver thoughts, since the writer was then feeling the approach of his last illness. Other close intimates of the Dumfries period were John Syme and Dr. W. Maxwell. Syme was a man of good birth and education, who as distributor of stamps had his office on the ground floor above which Burns first lived at Dumfries. The poet had such a high opinion of Syme's taste that he sometimes submitted newly composed poetical pieces to him in order to receive criticisms or suggestions. In 1793 the pair made an excursion together in Galloway, calling at the Earl of Selkirk's and other mansions, and a sprightly account of the little tour, written by Mr. Syme, is extant. In it he states that Burns composed "Scots wha hae" in the midst of a storm on the wilds of Kenmure—a statement that unfortunately cannot be reconciled with the poet's own words when sending the song to Thomson. Dr. Maxwell attended the poet during his last illness, and he and Syme proved good friends to the widow and family after his death. They were both regarded as Jacobins by the loyalists of Dumfries, and with Burns were stigmatized as "sons of sedi-

[1] We are told, on what appears on the face of it to be satisfactory evidence, that Burns bought four carronades belonging to this brig and sent them as a present to the French revolutionary government, thereby incurring the severe displeasure of his superiors, though the guns were intercepted at Dover. Singularly enough, though the brig and her stores were sold by public auction, and Burns's odd purchase must, one would think, have given rise to some talk, nothing is heard of the affair till it was told in Lockhart's Life in 1828. It does not appear in Burns's letters, yet we might have expected to find it in the exculpatory letter to Mr. Graham already referred to, or mentioned in this connection. How the guns should have reached Dover and not gone straight to a French port is also somewhat puzzling.

tion". Dr. Maxwell while studying medicine in Paris had become imbued with republican ideas, and as one of the French National Guards had been present at the execution of Louis XVI. Like the poet, both Syme and Maxwell enrolled themselves as volunteers.

By the year 1794, if not earlier, Burns in regard to health and constitution was not the man he had been, though then only at the age of thirty-five. In one way or another he had lived too fast for his constitution. In June of that year, writing to Mrs. Dunlop, he states that he had been in poor health and was afraid he was about to suffer for "the follies of his youth", and that his medical friends threatened him with a flying gout. What he refers to as his youth here is not very clear; for, as has been seen above, when he speaks of his youth he sometimes refers to a time far advanced beyond juvenility. Some six months later he speaks of already feeling "the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age". To this period belongs one of Burns's finest letters, written in a serious and rather melancholy mood. It was addressed to his Edinburgh friend, Alexander Cunningham, and is dated Dumfries, 25th February, 1794. The following are extracts: "Canst thou minister to a mind diseased? . . . For these two months I have not been able to lift a pen. My constitution and frame were, *ab origine*, blasted with a deep incurable taint of hypochondria, which poisons my existence. Of late a number of domestic vexations, and some pecuniary share in the ruin of these d——d times—losses which, though trifling, were what I could ill bear—have so irritated me, that my feelings at times could only be envied by a reprobate spirit, listening to the sentence that dooms it to perdition.

"I do not remember, my dear Cunningham, that you and I ever talked on the subject of religion at all. I know some who laugh at it, as the trick of the crafty FEW, to lead the undiscerning MANY; or at most as an uncertain obscurity, which mankind can never know anything of, and with which they are fools if they give themselves much to do. Nor would I quarrel with a man for his irreligion, any more than I would for his want of a musical ear. I would regret that he was shut out from what to me and to others were such superlative sources of enjoyment. It is in this point of view, and for this reason, that I will deeply

imbue the mind of every child of mine with religion. If my son should happen to be a man of feeling, sentiment, and taste, I shall thus add largely to his enjoyments. Let me flatter myself that this sweet little fellow, who is just now running about my desk, will be a man of a melting, ardent, glowing heart, and an imagination delighted with the painter and rapt with the poet. Let me figure him wandering out in a sweet evening, to inhale the balmy gale and enjoy the growing luxuriance of the spring; himself the while in the blooming youth of life. He looks abroad on all nature, and through nature up to nature's God. His soul, by swift delighting degrees, is rapt above this sublunary sphere until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thomson—

> These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God. The rolling year
> Is full of thee."

What instruction in the form of doctrines, beliefs, or precepts he would have taught his son by way of imbuing his mind with religion is not very evident. The question of religion is frequently handled in his letters to Mrs. Dunlop, sometimes also in those to Cunningham; but his statements as to his own beliefs are somewhat inconsistent, if not contradictory. On one occasion he describes himself to Mrs. Dunlop as "a very sincere believer in the Bible"; but his attitude towards revealed religion must rather be estimated from his statement that he is afraid that "every fair, unprejudiced inquirer must in some degree be a sceptic"; and from the apostrophe: "Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters! I trust thou art no impostor, and that the revelation of blissful scenes of existence beyond death and the grave is not one of the many impositions which time after time have been palmed on credulous mankind. . . ." That revealed religion made little appeal to him appears also from one of his earlier letters to Mrs. Dunlop (June, 1789), in which he formulates what he calls his "creed" as based entirely on reason and reflection. The chief articles in it are briefly: "That there is an incomprehensible great Being, to whom I owe my existence. . . . That there is a real and eternal distinction between virtue and vice, and consequently that I am an accountable creature . . . and that there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave." "I will go farther," he adds, "and

affirm that from the sublimity, excellence, and purity of his doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages . . . therefore Jesus Christ was from God."

Burns is sometimes represented as making attacks on the Kirk and even on religion, but this is hardly correct, though in dealing with religious and ecclesiastical topics and personages he is apt to pass beyond the bounds of decorum, to be guilty of undue severity, of profane jocularity, and even ribaldry. It was really narrow-mindedness, bigotry—especially of the Calvinistic sort—hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and petty clerical tyranny—together with zeal for his own particular friends—that inspired his fiercest onslaughts, and he took a keen delight in wielding the lash. Lockhart even applied the harsh epithet "blasphemous" to some of his satiric "performances"; but he points out at the same time (what is well known), that such performances were "not only pardoned but applauded by ministers of religion".[1]

We seem to get some insight into the vagaries of human character and the wayward moods of Burns, when we find the author of such letters as that to Cunningham quoted above, within a very short time sending rhymes to another friend of such a character that they have never yet seen the open light of day, and can only pass occasionally from hand to hand *sub rosa*. Of course it was always Burns's way to adapt himself to the tastes and feelings of his correspondents; so he was serious with the serious, sentimental with the sentimental; for the time being a Jacobite or even something of a Jacobin; and similarly he would produce loose and humorous rhymes for the delectation of those whose tastes lay in that direction.

During the greater part of 1795 Burns continued to be fit for his excise duties and for correspondence with Thomson and others, but in October he was laid up, though not regularly confined to bed. A little before this his troubles were aggravated by the loss of a daughter, a girl of four years of age. The following details regarding his illness and last days, ob-

[1] Mr. Lockhart thinks it a matter of regret that the same man who wrote *The Cotter's Saturday Night* should have also written *The Holy Fair*. But the latter is a quite justifiable exposure of the unseemly externals that had been allowed to gather round the celebration of a sacred rite, which is itself not referred to by the poet. No little attention had been drawn to the abuses of "holy fairs" before this time.

tained from Burns's friend and medical attendant, Dr. Maxwell, are quoted from Dr. Currie:—

"From October, 1795, to the January following, an accidental complaint confined him to the house. A few days after he began to go abroad he dined at a tavern and returned home about three o'clock on a very cold morning, benumbed and intoxicated. This was followed by an attack of rheumatism, which confined him about a week. His appetite now began to fail; his hands shook, and his voice faltered in any exertion or emotion. His pulse became weaker and more rapid, and pain in the larger joints, and in the hands and feet, deprived him of the enjoyment of refreshing sleep. Too much dejected in his spirits, and too well aware of his real situation to entertain hopes of recovery, he was ever musing over the approaching desolation of his family, and his spirits sunk into an uniform gloom . . .

"About the latter end of June he was advised to go into the country, and, impatient of medical advice, as well as of every species of control, he determined for himself to try the effects of bathing in the sea.[1] For this purpose he took up his residence at Brow, in Annandale, about ten miles east of Dumfries, on the shore of the Solway Firth. . . .

"At first Burns imagined bathing in the sea had been of benefit to him: the pains in his limbs were relieved; but this was immediately followed by a new attack of fever. When brought back to his own house in Dumfries, on the 18th of July, he was no longer able to stand upright. At this time a tremor pervaded his frame; his tongue was parched, and his mind sunk into delirium, when not roused by conversation. On the second and third day the fever increased and his strength diminished. On the fourth, the sufferings of this great but ill-fated genius were terminated." The day of his death was July 21, 1796.

It was at Brow that he had his last interview with Mrs. Maria Riddell, then residing in the neighbourhood in a poor state of health. To her he spoke with firmness of the death that seemed too surely approaching; expressed concern regarding his wife and family, regretted that he had written and circulated things

[1] It is difficult to reconcile this statement with what the poet says in his last letter to Alexander Cunningham, written a fortnight before his death, namely, that "the medical folks" told him that his "last and only chance was bathing and country quarters, and riding".

unworthy of his genius, and that he desired to have excluded, but could not now prevent from being included in his collected works; and lamented that he had written many epigrams on persons against whom he had no real enmity and whose characters he had no wish to hurt. His *Monody on a Lady famed for her Caprice* must certainly have been then on his mind. It could by no means be said of Burns, as was said of Thomson, that he had not written "one line that dying he could wish to blot". After his death Mrs. Riddell wrote an able and eloquent appreciation of the poet, marked by insight and judgment.

Up almost to the last he continued writing verses. Jessie Lewars was the theme of several songs ("Here's a Health to ane I loe dear", "Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast", &c.), and her kind attentions to the suffering poet have been rewarded with a share in his immortality. Even at this crisis he could take an interest in political affairs, and an election ballad (the last of the four "Heron ballads") was thrown off; such things cost him very little effort. The last piece of all that came from his pen—written at Brow—was "Fairest Maid on Devon banks", in which his mind seems to have gone back to the happy days of 1787, when he was enjoying the company of Charlotte Hamilton and Peggy Chalmers on the banks of "the clear winding Devon".

It is sad to think that in the closing days of his life Burns, though he left few debts, had money troubles to afflict him. Knowing his poverty, and being greatly concerned for the fate of his wife and family, he was driven almost to distraction by receiving a lawyer's letter calling upon him to pay a petty account due to a tradesman, "a cruel scoundrel of a haberdasher" he calls him.[1] He had to crave an old friend now in Forfar for the return of money lent, and he applied successfully for a loan of ten pounds to his cousin Mr. Burness of Montrose, and for one of five to his friend and correspondent George Thomson. His appeal to the former in particular—whom he implores to save him "from the horrors of a jail"—is truly pathetic reading. Thomson, while sending the sum asked for, suggested that the poet might "muster a volume of poetry", to be published by subscription; and it has always been something of a mystery

[1] The overdue account is said to have been for his volunteer uniform.

why this was not done by Burns in these latter days of pecuniary stress, if not before. The volume might have included *Tam o' Shanter* and a large number of songs, the *Jolly Beggars* also, but this had been overlooked and neglected by its author. We have it from himself that he did intend, on the completion of Thomson's work, to publish "on a cheap plan" all the songs written for Thomson, the *Museum*, &c., or at least all of which he wished to be called the author, so that he might not "be blamed for trash he never saw, or be defrauded by other claimants of what is justly my own". It seems he need have been in no fear of a jail, at least it is said his creditor had no intention of carrying the matter to such an extremity; but, unlike some men of genius, Burns was extremely scrupulous in regard to the payment of debts and to putting himself under pecuniary obligations of any kind. Among his last letters was one of farewell to Mrs. Dunlop, to whom he had written other letters without receiving any answer. This final letter of the poet had the effect of drawing from the lady a reply, to which John Lewars, Burns's fellow exciseman and friend, sent an answer, assuring her that her "kind letter gave him great ease and satisfaction, and was the last thing he was capable of perusing or understanding".

Burns's death, at the early age of thirty-seven, called forth a very widespread feeling of sorrow, not only in the Dumfries district, but in others where he was personally known. Much sympathy was felt for his widow and family, and private animosities were doubtless soon forgotten. His funeral, which took place on the 25th, was a public one, and he was buried with military honours, his own volunteer corps taking part in the ceremonies, and also regiments of infantry and cavalry that then were quartered in Dumfries. He was laid to rest in the churchyard of St. Michael's, Dumfries, where nearly twenty years afterwards a mausoleum to him was erected.

Regarding personal characteristics and traits of the poet the following may be quoted from Dr. Currie, who is speaking partly from his own observation, partly from information given him by intimates of Burns: "Burns was nearly five feet[1] ten inches in height, and of a form that indicated agility as well as

[1] "I 'm twenty-three and five feet *nine*,
I 'll go and be a sodger", said Burns himself.

strength. His well-raised forehead, shaded with black curling hair, indicated extensive capacity. His eyes were large, dark, full of ardour and intelligence. His face was well formed; and his countenance uncommonly interesting and expressive. His mode of dressing, which was often slovenly, and a certain fulness and bend in his shoulders, characteristic of his original profession, disguised in some degree the natural symmetry and elegance of his form. On a first view his physiognomy had a certain air of coarseness, mingled, however, with an expression of deep penetration, and of calm thoughtfulness approaching to melancholy. There appeared in his first manner and address perfect ease and self-possession, but a stern and almost supercilious elevation, not indeed incompatible with openness and affability, which, however, bespoke a mind conscious of superior talents. Strangers that supposed themselves approaching an Ayrshire peasant, who could make rhymes, and to whom their notice was an honour, found themselves speedily overawed by the presence of a man who bore himself with dignity, and who possessed a similar power of correcting forwardness and of repelling intrusion. But . . . his dark and haughty countenance easily relaxed into a look of goodwill, of pity, or of tenderness; and as the various emotions succeeded each other in his mind, assumed with equal ease the expression of the broadest humour, of the most extravagant mirth, of the deepest melancholy, or of the most sublime emotion. . . . An English lady, familiarly acquainted with several of the most distinguished characters of the present times, assured the editor that in the happiest of his social hours, there was a charm about Burns which she had never seen equalled. This charm arose not more from the power than the versatility of his genius. . . .

"This, indeed, is to represent Burns in his happiest phasis. In large and mixed parties he was often silent and dark, sometimes fierce and overbearing; he was jealous of the proud man's scorn, jealous to an extreme of the insolence of wealth, and prone to avenge, even on its innocent possessor, the partiality of fortune. By nature kind, brave, sincere, and in a singular degree compassionate, he was, on the other hand, proud, irascible, and vindictive."

According to Mrs. Riddell, the lady just referred to by Dr. Currie, "he was seldom, indeed never, implacable in his resent-

ment, and sometimes, it has been alleged, not inviolably faithful in his engagements of friendship. Much indeed has been said about his inconstancy and caprice, but I am inclined to believe that they originated less in a levity of sentiment than from an impetuosity of feeling which rendered him prompt to take umbrage. . . . He was far from averse to the incense of flattery and could receive it tempered with less delicacy than might have been expected, as he seldom transgressed extravagantly in that way himself. . . . He was candid and manly in the avowal of his errors, and *his avowal* was a *reparation*."

Although possessing a due sense of his own merits and position as a poet, and somewhat apt to claim rather too much for "the bard" in the way of privileges and immunities in regard to matters of conduct, he had no petty vanity about his poetic reputation and was free from envy of others who were ambitious of literary fame—was indeed always ready to give them the benefit of his advice, and was apt to be too generous in his appreciation. That he was always mindful of his own precept, "then gently scan your brother man, Still gentler sister woman," can, of course, not be truthfully affirmed; instances of the "adviser" who "recks not his own rede" are all too common in life. It may be asserted, indeed, that he often failed to make due allowance for the weaknesses of others, and was too ready to criticize motives and even indulge in unworthy suspicions. In regard to women with whom he came in close relations he sometimes showed a certain hardness—it has been called a want of chivalry[1]—that would scarcely have been expected. Occasionally we seem to see what may be looked on as touches of theatricality, if not of real insincerity. He was a good son, a good brother, an affectionate father, and a kind husband—if allowance is made for certain lapses; and he was ready to put himself about to do a good turn to anyone who seemed to deserve it.

[1] "The cardinal flaw in his character," asserts Mr. J. A. Millar, in his *Literary History of Scotland* (Fisher Unwin, 1903), "was unquestionably his want of chivalrous feeling where women are concerned." This is emphasized by Mr. R. L. Stevenson, Mr. Henley, and others. In regard to this topic we may quote from a letter of Burns to George Thomson: "The welfare and happiness of the beloved object is the first and inviolate sentiment that pervades my soul; and whatever pleasures I might wish for, or whatever might be the raptures they would give me, yet, if they interfere with that first principle, it is having these pleasures at a dishonest price; and justice forbids, and generosity disdains the purchase! As to the herd of the sex who are good for little or nothing else, I have made no such agreement with myself."

Burns left five sons, the youngest being born on the day of his father's funeral. Robert, the eldest, after receiving a good education, partly at the universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, obtained a situation in the Stamp Office, London, retired on a small pension in 1833, and died at Dumfries in 1857. He took after his father in some matters of character and conduct, but by no means in genius, though not wanting in abilities. The next son, Francis Wallace, died in 1803 at the age of fourteen. Two younger sons, William Nicol and James Glencairn, born respectively in 1791 and 1794, attained to excellent positions under the East India Company. The former, after a long period of service, retired from the Indian army in 1843 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, becoming colonel by brevet in 1855; he died at Cheltenham in 1872. The latter, after being judge and collector for Cachar, retired as major in 1839, became lieutenant-colonel by brevet in 1855, and died ten years later at Cheltenham where he had been living with his brother William. He left two daughters. Maxwell, the youngest son, survived his father only three years.

Immediately after the poet's death a movement was started to raise by means of public subscriptions a fund for the benefit of his wife and children. The chief centres of collection, besides Dumfries, were Edinburgh and London, the chief movers in the matter at Dumfries being Dr. Maxwell and Mr. Syme, at Edinburgh, Mr. Cunningham.[1] The total amount of money thus raised appears to have been about £1200, and of this £800 was set apart for behoof of Mrs. Burns and her sons, while £400 was set apart for the benefit of the poet's two illegitimate daughters. In a short time it was arranged that Dr. Currie was to bring out a collective edition of the poet's writings for behoof of the widow and family, and the profits derived from this are said to have amounted to £1400. The work appeared

[1] Intimate as William Nicol was with Burns, it surprised him to learn that the poet had died in poverty. Writing to John Lewars shortly after Burns's death he says: "What has become of Burns's money? He certainly received £600 for the sale of the first edition of his poems, and £100 more for the copyright. . . . Our friend might lose something by Ellisland and a trifling sum by his illicit a[mour]s, but still the disappearance of his money remains to be accounted for." Burns, as we know upon other evidence, could follow the advice given by him in the *Epistle to a Young Friend* to "still keep something to yoursel' ye scarcely tell to ony". If the "£400 some odds" that he spoke of as expecting to "clear" was over and above the £180 lent to his brother Gilbert—and his own words to Dr. Moore are quite compatible with this—the sum of £600 would just be made up without the copyright money. Nicol himself died less than a year after Burns, at the age of fifty-three.

in 1800 in four volumes octavo, and comprised letters and a biography as well as the poetical writings. Though incomplete and in various ways defective, it was executed with considerable ability, and for a good many years was regarded as the standard authority for the poet's life and works. The editor, James Currie, M.D. (1756–1805), son of the parish minister of Kirkpatrick Fleming, Dumfriesshire, and a physician in good practice at Liverpool, had only one short meeting with Burns, but was well acquainted with friends of the poet and with the surroundings of his latter days. In the way thus stated Mrs. Burns was assured of a modest income, to which her son James made a substantial addition from about—or soon after—1817 onwards, when he had attained a position that enabled him to do so. Mrs. Burns died at Dumfries in 1834, in her sixty-eighth year, having survived her husband thirty-eight years.

The poet's brother Gilbert remained as farmer at Mossgiel up to 1798, then took another farm, and from 1804 till his death in 1827 was factor for Lord Blantyre's East Lothian estates, his residence being at Grant's Braes, Haddington. Here old Mrs. Burns died in 1820. Isabella, a sister, by marriage Mrs. Begg, died in 1858 at the age of eighty-seven, after having been a widow for forty-five years. She enjoyed a small government pension from 1842, and the profits of Robert Chambers's edition of the *Life and Works of Burns* (published in 1851–2) were generously handed over to her by the publishers. She had supplied Robert Chambers with information utilized in his important work.[1]

In Burns as a poet perhaps what is most remarkable is the combination of variety and strength. Song, satire, narrative, description, dialogue, the epistle, the didactic poem all come easily within his range, and in turn he delights us with humour, tenderness, pathos, sublimity, homely morality, shrewdness and wisdom applied to the affairs of everyday life. The following eloquent and well-founded criticisms by his early biographer and critic, Robert Heron, are not unworthy of quotation here—especially as Heron not only knew Burns, but was familiar by birth

[1] Dr. Chambers collected a vast amount of biographical information, and his edition is in this respect perhaps the fullest of any. After receiving improvements from Dr. Chambers himself, it has been issued in a considerably modified form under the editorship of Dr. W. Wallace, but the earlier work still appears among the publications of Messrs. W. & R. Chambers, along with the later.

and upbringing with the life that Burns so ably depicts: "Whatever be the subject of his verse, he still seems to grasp it with giant force; to wield and turn it with easy dexterity; to view it on all sides, with an eye which no turn of outline and no hue of colouring can elude; to mark all its relations to the group of surrounding objects, and then to select what he chooses to represent to our imagination with a skilful and happy propriety, which shows him to have been at the same time master of all the rest. . . . It is impossible to consider without astonishment that amazing fertility of invention which is displayed under the regulation of a sound judgment and a correct taste in *The Twa Dogs*; the *Address to the Deil*; *Scotch Drink*; *The Holy Fair*; *Halloween*; *The Cotter's Saturday Night*; *To a Haggis*; *To a Louse*; *To a Mountain Daisy*; *Tam o' Shanter*; *On Captain Grose's Peregrinations*; *The Humble Petition of Bruar Water*; *The Bard's Epitaph*. . . . Almost all the sentiment and images diffused throughout the poems of Burns are fresh from the mint of nature. He sings what he had himself beheld with interested attention—what he had himself felt with keen emotions of pain or pleasure. You actually see what he describes; you more than sympathize with his joys; your bosom is inflamed with all his fire; your heart dies away within you, infected by the contagion of his despondency. He exalts, for a time, the genius of the reader to the elevation of his own; and for the moment confers upon him all the powers of a poet."

Though Burns showed originality and power in his methods of treatment, in his choice of subject and metrical forms he was content on the whole to follow the lead of his predecessors: he struck out no new path for himself. Steeped as he was in the later vernacular literature of Scotland, he was satisfied to work on the lines laid down by the Scottish "makers" before his day. For his immediate predecessors, Robert Fergusson and Allan Ramsay, he had avowedly a high admiration; he studied them in order "to kindle at their flame", and was indeed indebted to them in no small measure; but being a man of much higher genius he had no difficulty in far surpassing them in their own fields.[1] Burns's *Cotter's Saturday Night* was undoubtedly

[1] Robert Fergusson died in 1774 at the early age of twenty-four—an age at which Burns had produced little or nothing that would have kept his name in remembrance. He had

suggested by Fergusson's *Farmer's Ingle*, as his *Holy Fair* was suggested by Fergusson's *Leith Races* and *Hallow Fair*; his *Brigs of Ayr* by the *Plainstanes and Causey* and *The Ghaists*; his *Scotch Drink* by *Cauler Water*; and *The Mouse* and *The Mountain Daisy* by such pieces of Fergusson's as those on *The Gowdspink*, *The Bee*, and *The Butterfly in the Street*. Sundry of his epistles, elegies, &c., had their prototypes among the productions of Fergusson, Ramsay, or Hamilton of Gilbertfield. Ramsay's charming pastoral drama, *The Gentle Shepherd*, however, did not evoke his rivalry—indeed he confessed his inability to compete with Ramsay here—and *The Gentle Shepherd* remains unique, and is probably far too little read at the present day.

To James Thomson of *The Seasons* he was also in some respects indebted; and different as was the sonorous blank verse of Thomson from Burns's own style we find him borrowing certain phrases from Thomson — thus, "manners-painting verse" was taken from Thomson; "the blackening train of clamorous rooks" was Thomson's before Burns spoke of "the blackening train of craws"; so with "wild Shakespeare", "unhappy Wallace", &c. Thomson before Burns had expressed his strong detestation of so-called sport, that means the slaughter of hapless coveys by the "tyrant man", "tyrannic lord" of this world; had expressed pity for the timid hare falling an easy prey to its numerous persecutors; and in general—like Burns—had evinced a lively feeling for bird and beast. And Thomson, like Burns, was the poet of Liberty, though it is to be feared that his long and unreadable poem bearing that title has done but little to advance the cause.

received a university education, but fate was against him and to drudge as a humble clerk was his lot. Though inferior to Burns in strength, versatility, and graphic power, his best pieces in the vernacular display much natural humour, keenness of observation, and an admirable command of language; in mere poetical "correctness" he surpasses Burns. But he had no lyrical gift. As Mr. T. F. Henderson says (*Scottish Vernacular Literature*, 1898), "like Stevenson he had a cunning sense of style, and here his influence is very manifest on Burns, who time and again echoes not merely his sentiments but his phraseology". Allan Ramsay, though born in a similar station in life, had a career very different from that of either of his successors. From being a wigmaker in Edinburgh he became a prosperous bookseller and circulating-library owner, and he died a man of substance, the year before Burns was born, at the age of seventy-two. He had the merit of heading the movement which early in the century gave new life to Scottish literature, and the song, the satire, the tale, the epistle, the elegy (humorous or other) were taken up by him in turn, and with no small success, but his productions are often marred by bad taste. Like Burns he was welcome at the tables of men of rank and position, and his popularity was only eclipsed by that of Burns. He too was known outside of Scotland, and had Gay and Pope among his correspondents.

Among English poets Shenstone was much admired by Burns, and in *The Cotter* we seem to hear echoes of Shenstone's *Village Schoolmistress*. Burns's favourite forms of stanza were all in common use among the Scottish writers that came before him—some of them had been handed down from time long past.

So also, in a large number of his songs, Burns has been indebted to singers of an earlier day—many of them unknown by name. Burns had an extraordinary acquaintance with the stores of song, printed and unprinted, that existed in his time, and in ever so many cases he has taken scraps and snatches—it may be a refrain or a whole stanza or more—of older ditties, and so blended and interwoven them with materials of his own that it is impossible to say whether the result can be justly called Burns's or not. But of course he has left us many inimitable songs that are unquestionably of his own mint, and that range over the whole lyric field.[1]

Different persons will form different estimates as to the relative value—that is, as compared with his other works—of the songs of Burns. In judging of a song one is apt to be influenced by the air associated with it, as much as by the words themselves, and many of Burns's songs are hardly thought of as apart from the music, so that the poet almost gets credit for this as well as for the words. Sir Walter Scott (followed by R. L. Stevenson), without undervaluing the songs of Burns, regretted "that so much of his time and talents was frittered away in compiling and composing for musical collections", as diverting the poet from his grand plan of dramatic composition. Others have had much the same feeling, and, in particular, Lockhart would have gladly seen him not only attempt the drama but also produce

[1] The extent of Burns's indebtedness to his predecessors has been expiscated with great thoroughness and research, and with striking results, in the "Centenary Edition of Burns's Poetry", edited by W. E. Henley and T. F. Henderson (T. C. & E. C. Jack, publishers, 1897). As Mr. Henley says, "The best of many nameless singers lives in Burns's songs. . . . He was the last and greatest of them all . . . but for them, he could never have approved himself the most exquisite artist in folk-song the world has ever seen". Mr. J. H. Millar, in his excellent *Literary History of Scotland*, strongly insists on the necessity of a right understanding as to Burns's position in Scottish literature: "The first and most essential point to be borne in mind is one which . . . can scarcely be too strongly emphasized. It is, that Burns marks the close, not the beginning of a dynasty of poets. He was not the founder of a school, but its most finished and its final product. In him the vernacular poetry of Scotland reached its highest consummation, . . . and with his death (certain symptoms of posthumous vitality notwithstanding) it died."

"a series of national tales", similar in character to *Tam o' Shanter*. Whether Burns would have had success as a dramatist is a matter of very great doubt, taking drama in the ordinary sense of the term. As it is, his nearest approach to a dramatic piece is *The Jolly Beggars*, which, however, is descriptive and narrative rather than dramatic, contains no plot or real dialogue, and has not inaptly been classed as a "cantata".[1] It is worth notice that though Burns was fascinated with the songs of his native country, its ballads seem to have made comparatively little impression on him—this was no doubt owing to a certain lack of feeling for the romantic.

One factor that has always made for the popularity of the poet is his abounding sympathy and kindly feeling, his tenderness for all things animate, and even inanimate. Another is the fact that—apart from the use of some rather out-of-the-way Scottish vocables—he is always easily understood, indulges in no subtleties or profundities, and goes straight to the heart of things. As allied to this should be mentioned his penetrating and sagacious reflections on the facts of life—practical wisdom embodied in pithy and memorable sayings; for Burns was a "proverbial philosopher" in the best sense of the phrase. Generally speaking his purely English poems are only of mediocre value, that is, such pieces as are written after conventional English models, on themes that do not really touch his heart and stir his feelings. It is when he is wielding his native vernacular that he is at his best, when he sets before us some aspect of Scottish life and character, the manners and customs of his native district, ideas, feelings, or individual portraiture, drawn from the rural or village life with which his own life was so closely interwoven. And yet at other times he can depart from the vernacular without sacrifice of strength or brilliancy. *The Jolly Beggars*, for instance, may be adduced in support of this, and more especially the famous ditty—inspired by the "careless rapture" of a life freed from

[1] That he might have achieved something brilliant in the musical drama, as Lockhart claims, may be allowed. Referring to *The Jolly Beggars* he writes as follows: "That extraordinary sketch, coupled with his later lyrics in a higher vein, is enough to show that in him we had a master capable of placing the musical drama on a level with the loftiest of our classical forms. 'Beggar's Bush' and 'Beggar's Opera' sink into tameness in comparison; and, indeed, without profanity to the name of Shakspere, it may be said that out of such materials even his genius could hardly have constructed a piece in which imagination could have more splendidly predominated over the outward shows of things."

social trammels and conventions—with the famous chorus, "A fig for those by law protected", &c. Admirers of *The Cotter's Saturday Night* may also adduce that poem in behalf of the same cause, since a great part of it has only a slight tincture of the vernacular element, and the same may be said of *The Vision*. "Scots wha hae" is also practically English, though dressed up a little to give it something of a Scottish aspect. Yet surely "Scots who have with Wallace bled, Scots whom Bruce has often led" would have been not a whit less poetical and telling than "Scots wha hae", &c.[1]

It can only be a matter of the vaguest conjecture what and how many of his pieces Burns himself would have rejected if he had been preparing a definite edition of his poems. As the matter stands, it must be admitted that literature would have been but little the poorer if a good deal of what is included in his published writings had never seen the light; though all have some interest owing to their source. It has been repeatedly maintained that the technique of Burns's serious verse is apt to be found defective when judged according to the high standard set up by modern criticism. His language may be picturesque, felicitous, and expressive, or terse, forcible, and graphic, but true poetic beauty, artistic perfection in the use of language, are but rarely to be met with in Burns's poems.

It is of course well understood that a certain number of things usually included in editions of Burns's poetical writings are not of the class intended *virginibus puerisque*. In these days, indeed, they would hardly be put before the public at all had they not acquired a sort of prescriptive right by early publication, and as coming from a man of genius. Other pieces have already been alluded to as printed, but not published, and as enjoying only a sort of twilight existence, being included—along with others from different sources—in a collection originating with Burns, and known as *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*. In writing things of this kind Burns was but following a fashion set before his time both in England and Scotland. One who has not seen them could hardly believe how much indecency is contained in some

[1] J. A. H. Murray (not then editor of the great Oxford English Dictionary, still less Sir James) drew attention to this feature of Burns's song long ago in his work *The Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland* (1873).

of the eighteenth-century song-books (not to speak of prose writings by men of genius such as Sterne). These indecent ditties are generally the veriest trash, the votaries of the wanton muse ("*musa proterva*") being very commonly dull dogs; but, as might be expected, Burns's effusions in this vein, though indecorous enough, have the saving grace of humour; and it may be truly asserted that there is little or nothing in them that is really of an evilly seductive tendency. The standard of what is decorous or indecorous is more or less a conventional one, and has varied greatly at different times.[1] Allan Ramsay, whose collection of songs entitled the *Tea-Table Miscellany* first came out (or the first part of it) in 1724, declared that he had kept out "all smut and ribaldry". No doubt he intended to do so, yet he did not quite succeed, though his is a much cleaner book than Durfey's notorious collection and other English collections of the time (which usually had Scots songs interspersed). Towards the end of the century taste was becoming more refined, and in the *Scots Musical Museum*, to which Burns so largely contributed, there is comparatively little that can be objected to as offensive, while Thomson's collection, which followed it, is irreproachable in this respect. Burns, of course, well knew that he was a sinner, and writing to an intimate friend on one occasion he deplores, with mock ruefulness, his propensity to grossness, acknowledging himself to be "the most offending soul alive", and enclosing, in proof thereof, another sample of his dexterity in this class of composition!

The letters of Burns, as contained in the more complete editions of his collected works, form an aggregate of considerable bulk. His correspondents embraced almost "all sorts and conditions of men", and women, from noblemen and ladies of title downwards; and the letters take on a colouring corresponding

[1] Sir Walter Scott gives an interesting anecdote, illustrating the change in taste that may take place within a single lifetime. His grandaunt, Mrs. Keith of Ravelstone, "a person of some condition", had, in her youth, been familiar with the novels of the notorious Aphra Behn, and in her old age, out of curiosity, wished to look at them again. Sir Walter lent her his copy, which she returned, as he says, "with nearly these words:—'Take back your bonny Mrs. Behn; and, if you will take my advice, put her in the fire, for I found it impossible to get through the very first novel. But is it not,' she said, 'a very odd thing that I, an old woman of eighty and upwards, sitting alone, feel myself ashamed to read a book which sixty years ago I have heard read aloud for the amusement of large circles, consisting of the first and most creditable society of London.' This, of course, was owing to the gradual improvement of the national taste and delicacy."

to person and occasion. Among them are productions of quite a formal class, others, such as those addressed to intimate associates and friends, are naturally in a very different strain. Those sent to Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop and those to Miss Chalmers have been already commented on as regards their special merits; and so have those—written in quite another key—of which Mrs. M'Lehose was the inspirer and recipient. His correspondence with George Thomson embodies many interesting and valuable remarks and opinions regarding Scottish songs and melodies, and regarding Burns's practice in composing his songs. All his letters may be called interesting in one respect or another, and they are valuable for the light they cast on the life and circumstances or the character of the writer. Many of them display a remarkable command of language—at times the language of unmeasured invective. Some of them, as we have seen, discuss the most solemn and serious subjects, and may contain passages written in an elevated semi-poetical strain. In this class are letters that show Burns at his best as a prose writer and as a man. Some are in a playful or humorous vein, and occasionally we find him producing rhapsodical effusions difficult to classify. Not a few contain shrewd penetrating judgments, criticisms, and comments on men and books, politics and politicians, matters of all kinds. On the whole they are perhaps somewhat apt to be lacking in spontaneity and naturalness, and to be marred by high-flown or stilted language and overstrained sentiment. Some of them may be called formal literary compositions rather than letters proper; and occasionally the writer made the same passage do duty in different letters to different correspondents.

THE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS

POEMS AND SONGS.

EARLIEST TO 1786.

SONG—HANDSOME NELL.[1]

TUNE—"*I am a man unmarried.*"

"The following composition," says Burns, in his first Common-place Book, referring to this lyric, "was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of my life [probably 1775], when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity, unacquainted and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world. The performance is, indeed, very puerile and silly, but I am always pleased with it, as it recalls to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest, and my tongue was sincere. The subject of it was a young girl, who really deserved all the praises I have bestowed upon her. I not only had this opinion of her then—but I actually think so still, now that the spell is long since broken, and the enchantment at an end."

O, once I lov'd a bonnie lass,
  Ay, and I love her still;
And whilst that virtue warms my breast
  I'll love my handsome Nell.

As bonnie lasses I hae seen, — hae
  And mony full as braw, — well-dressed
But for a modest gracefu' mien
  The like I never saw.

A bonnie lass, I will confess,
  Is pleasant to the ee, — eye
But without some better qualities
  She's no a lass for me.

But Nellie's looks are blithe and sweet,
  And what is best of a', — all
Her reputation is complete,
  And fair without a flaw.

She dresses aye sae clean and neat, — always
  Both decent and genteel;
And then there's something in her gait
  Gars ony dress look weel. — makes well

[1] Of the subject of the song, Burns speaks more at large in the autobiographical sketch of his early days which he sent to Dr. Moore, and which will be found in the second volume of this work. The heroine's name was Nelly Kilpatrick, the daughter of a blacksmith to whom Burns was indebted for the loan of the *History of Sir William Wallace*. The inspiration took place in the harvest-field at Mount Oliphant, "in my fifteenth autumn", he says in the letter to Dr. Moore, and one would understand that the little piece was composed at that time. But elsewhere the poet expressly says it was written when he was a few months more than his sixteenth year, that is in 1775.

Burns himself, says Lockhart, "characterizes it as a very puerile and silly performance, yet it

A gaudy dress and gentle air
May slightly touch the heart,
But it's innocence and modesty
That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
'Tis this enchants my soul;
For absolutely in my breast
She reigns without control.

SONG—TIBBIE, I HAE SEEN THE DAY.[1]

TUNE—"*Invercauld's Reel.*"

Burns, in his notes written in an interleaved copy of Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*, presented to his friend Capt. Riddell, remarks in regard to this piece, "This song I composed about the age of seventeen." The year of its composition would therefore be probably 1776.

Oh, Tibbie, I hae seen the day,	have
Ye wad na been sae shy;	would not
For lack o' gear ye lightly me,	means slight
But, trowth, I care na by.[2]	truth, I care not
Yestreen I met you on the moor,	last night
Ye spak' na, but gaed by like stoure;	went flying dust
Ye geck at me because I'm poor,	toss the head
But fient a hair care I.	deuce
Oh, Tibbie, &c.	
When comin' hame on Sunday last,	home
Upon the road as I cam' past,	
Ye snufft an' gae your head a cast,	gave
But, trowth, I care't na by.	truth, I did not care
Oh, Tibbie, &c.	

contains here and there lines of which he need hardly have been ashamed at any period of his life."

Among the poet's memoranda, is the following somewhat elaborate criticism by himself on the same song:—"The first distich of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads; and, on the other hand, the second distich is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little awkward, and the sentiment too serious. Stanza the second I am well pleased with; and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the sex—the agreeables; or what in our Scottish dialect we call a *sweet sonsy lass*. The third stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it, and the third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth stanza is a very indifferent one; the first line is, indeed, all in the strain of the second stanza, but the rest is mostly an expletive. The thoughts in the fifth stanza come finely up to my favourite idea—*a sweet sonsy lass:* the last line, however, halts a little. The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth stanza: but the second and fourth lines, ending with short syllables, hurt the whole. The seventh stanza has several minute faults; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, and my blood sallies at the remembrance."

[1] The heroine is said, by Mrs. Begg, the poet's sister, to have been Isabella Steven, the daughter of a small land-owner near Lochlea, which, if true, unsettles her brother's chronology, for he was nineteen when the removal to Lochlea took place.

[2] This stanza is inserted in Burns's first Commonplace Book, extending from April, 1783, to October, 1785, and first printed in anything like complete form in 1872.—The Scotch idiom *care na by* means literally "care not *by*, or in regard to (that)."

I doubt na, lass, but ye may think,
Because ye hae the name o' clink, cash
That ye can please me at a wink,
Whene'er ye like to try.
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

But sorrow tak' him that's sae mean,
Altho' his pouch o' coin were clean, pocket
Wha follows ony saucy quean
That looks sae proud and high.
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

Altho' a lad were e'er sae smart,
If that he want the yellow dirt,
Ye'll cast your head anither airt, direction
And answer him fu' dry.
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

But if he hae the name o' gear, means
Ye'll fasten to him like a brier,
Tho' hardly he, for sense or lear, learning
Be better than the kye. kine
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

But, Tibbie, lass, tak' my advice,
Your daddie's gear mak's you sae nice;
The deil a ane wad speir your price, devil a one would ask
Were ye as poor as I.
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

There lives a lass beside yon park,
I'd rather hae her in her sark, shift
Than you wi' a' your thousand mark;
That gars you look sae high. makes
Oh, Tibbie, &c.

SONG—I DREAM'D I LAY.

"These two stanzas," says Burns, "I composed when I was seventeen [1776]: they are among the oldest of my printed pieces."

I dream'd I lay where flowers were springing,
Gaily in the sunny beam;
List'ning to the wild birds singing,
By a falling, crystal stream:
Straight the sky grew black and daring;
Thro' the woods the whirlwinds rave;
Trees with aged arms were warring
O'er the swelling, drumlie wave. turbid

Such was my life's deceitful morning,
  Such the pleasures I enjoy'd;
But lang or noon, loud tempests storming ere
  A' my flowery bliss destroy'd.
Tho' fickle Fortune has deceiv'd me,
  (She promis'd fair, and perform'd but ill;)
Of mony a joy and hope bereav'd me,
  I bear a heart shall support me still.[1]

TRAGIC FRAGMENT.[2]

"In my early years, nothing less would serve me than courting the Tragic Muse. I was, I think, about eighteen or nineteen when I sketched the outlines of a tragedy forsooth; but the bursting of a cloud of family misfortunes, which had for some time threatened us, prevented my further progress. In those days I never wrote down anything; so, except a speech or two, the whole has escaped my memory. The following, which I most distinctly remember, was an exclamation from a great character—great in occasional instances of generosity, and daring at times in villainies. He is supposed to meet with a child of misery, and exclaims to himself, 'All villain as I am!'" &c.—R. B.
—The piece was composed then in 1777 or 1778.

All villain as I am—a damnèd wretch,
A hardened, stubborn, unrepenting sinner,
Still my heart melts at human wretchedness;
And with sincere but unavailing sighs
I view the helpless children of distress!
With tears indignant I behold the oppressor
Rejoicing in the honest man's destruction,
Whose unsubmitting heart was all his crime.—
Ev'n you, ye hapless crew! I pity you;
Ye whom the seeming good think sin to pity;
Ye poor despised, abandoned vagabonds,
Whom Vice, as usual, has turn'd o'er to ruin.
Oh! but for friends and interposing Heaven,
I had been driven forth like you forlorn,
The most detested, worthless wretch among you!
O injured God! Thy goodness has endow'd me
With talents passing most of my compeers,
Which I in just proportion have abused—
As far surpassing other common villains
As thou in natural parts has given me more.

[1] "On comparing these verses with those on "Handsome Nell," the advance achieved by the young bard in the course of two short years must be regarded with admiration."—J. G. LOCKHART.

[2] This fragment was first published by Cromek in 1808, but without the concluding five lines; it was found by that industrious collector among the poet's papers, headed by Burns's note given above. The piece was copied into the Common-place Book in March, 1784. Notwithstanding the note given by Burns as to the origin of the Fragment, we find him heading one copy of it: "A Fragment in the Hour of Remorse, on Seeing a Fellow-Creature in Misery, whom I had once known in Better Days." Who can doubt that the lines beginning "With tears indignant," &c., refers to the tyrant factor whose insolent, threatening epistles used to set the family in tears; and that the "honest man" with "unsubmitting heart," was the poet's noble father.

THE TARBOLTON LASSES.

This is evidently an early production of the bard. Its exact date cannot be ascertained; its probable date may be given as 1778.

If ye gae up to yon hill-tap, — go
  Ye'll there see bonnie Peggy;
She kens her father is a laird, — land-owner.
  And she forsooth's a lady.

There Sophy tight, a lassie bright,
  Besides a handsome fortune:
Wha canna win her in a night — who cannot
  Has little art in courting.

Gae down by Faile, and taste the ale,
  And tak a look o' Mysie;
She's dour and din, a deil within, — obstinate dun (sallow)
  But aiblins she may please ye. — perhaps

If she be shy, her sister try,
  Ye'll maybe fancy Jenny,
If ye'll dispense wi' want o' sense—
  She kens hersel' she's bonnie.

As ye gae up by yon hillside
  Speer in for bonnie Bessie; — inquire
She'll gie ye a beck, and bid ye light, — give curtsy
  And handsomely address ye.

There's few sae bonnie, nane sae gude, — none so good
  In a' King George' dominion;
If ye should doubt the truth o' this—
  It's Bessy's ain opinion![1] — own

AH, WOE IS ME, MY MOTHER DEAR.

The following verses were copied from the Glenriddell MSS. in the Athenæum Library, Liverpool, and were contained in an account of these MSS., printed for private circulation in 1874. They were first published among the poems in Paterson's edition of Burns (Edin. 1877). They were probably written in 1778.

PARAPHRASE OF JEREMIAH XV. 10.

Ah, woe is me, my mother dear!
  A man of strife ye've born me:
For sair contention I maun bear; — sore must
  They hate, revile, and scorn me.

[1] The above satirical verses first appeared in Chambers's edition of the poet's works in 1851, with the editor's critical remark that they are strikingly inferior to the young bard's average efforts; "yet, as expressive of a mood of his feelings regarding his fair neighbours in these days of simplicity, they appear not unworthy of preservation." It is to be regretted that Chambers does not inform us where he got these verses, nor on what grounds he felt satisfied as to their authorship.

I ne'er could lend on bill or bond,
That five per cent might bless me;
And borrowing, on the tither hand, other
The deil a ane wad trust me. devil a one would

Yet I, a coin-denièd wight,
By Fortune quite discarded;
Ye see how I am, day and night,
By lad and lass blackguarded.

SONG—MONTGOMERY'S PEGGY.[1]

"The following fragment is done," writes Burns in his first Common-place Book, "something in imitation of the manner of a noble old Scotch piece called 'M'Millan's Peggy.' . . . My Montgomery's Peggy was my deity for six or eight months. She had been bred (though as the world says, without any just pretence for it) in a style of life rather elegant; but, as Vanburgh says in one of his comedies, 'My damned star found me out' there too; for though I began the affair merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, or, to tell the truth, which will scarcely be believed, a vanity of showing my parts in courtship, particularly my abilities at a *billet-doux*, which I always piqued myself upon, made me lay siege to her; and when, as I always do in my foolish gallantries, I had battered myself into a very warm affection for her, she told me one day in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been for some time before the rightful property of another; but, with the greatest friendship, and politeness, she offered me every alliance except actual possession. I found out afterwards that what she told me of a pre-engagement was really true; but it cost me some heart-aches to get rid of the affair. I have even tried to imitate, in this extempore thing, that irregularity in the rhyme, which, when judiciously done, has such a fine effect on the ear." The date of composition is probably 1779.

TUNE—"*Gala Water.*"

Altho' my bed were in yon muir,
Amang the heather, in my plaidie,
Yet happy, happy would I be,
Had I my dear Montgomery's Peggy.

When o'er the hill beat surly storms,
And winter nights were dark and rainy;
I'd seek some dell, and in my arms
I'd shelter dear Montgomery's Peggy.

Were I a baron proud and high,
And horse and servants waiting ready,
Then a' 'twad gie o' joy to me,
The sharin't with Montgomery's Peggy.[2]

[1] Peggy was housekeeper with Archibald Montgomery, Esq., of Coilsfield, and Burns had met her frequently at Tarbolton Mill. Besides they sat in the same church, like the Laird of Dumbiedykes and the lady whom, from this circumstance, that worthy learned to admire, and afterwards married.

[2] Not well expressed. The meaning is, "all of joy it would give to me (would be) the sharing of it," &c.

THE RONALDS OF THE BENNALS.[1]

This poem (written probably about 1780) was first published in Chambers's edition of Burns (1851); the editor does not indicate whence he derived it.

In Tarbolton ye ken, there are proper young men,
  And proper young lasses and a', man;
But ken ye the Ronalds that live in the Bennals,
  They carry the gree frae them a', man. — bear the palm from

Their father's a laird,[2] and weel he can spar't, — proprietor
  Braid money to tocher them a', man; — broad portion
To proper young men he'll clink in the hand
  Gowd guineas a hunder or twa, man. — gold

There's ane they ca' Jean, I'll warrant ye've seen — call
  As bonnie a lass or as braw, man, — well-dressed
But for sense and guid taste, she'll vie wi' the best,
  And a conduct that beautifies a', man.

The charms o' the min', the langer they shine, — mind
  The mair admiration they draw, man;
While peaches and cherries, and roses and lilies,
  They fade and they wither awa', man.

If ye be for Miss Jean, tak' this frae a frien', — from
  A hint o' a rival or twa, man;
The Laird o' Blackbyre wad gang through the fire, — would go
  If that wad entice her awa', man.

The Laird o' Braehead has been on his speed
  For mair than a towmond or twa, man, — twelvemonth
The Laird o' the Ford will straught on a board — be stretched
  If he canna get her at a,' man.

Then Anna comes in, the pride o' her kin,
  The boast o' our bachelors a', man;
She's sonsy and sweet, sae fully complete, — buxom
  She steals our affections awa', man,

If I should detail the pick and the wale — choice
  O' lasses that live here awa', man,
The fault wad be mine, if they didna shine
  The sweetest and best o' them a', man.

[1] The Bennals is a farm in the west part of Tarbolton parish, near Afton Lodge and a few miles from Lochlea (the poet's residence at this time). The farmer, Ronald, was considered to be a man of considerable means, and his two daughters were the belles of the district, being handsome and fairly well educated. Gilbert Burns wooed the elder sister Jean, but after a lengthened correspondence, he was rejected as being too poor. The poet himself seems to have had a liking for Anna, but was too proud to risk a refusal. But Fortune had humiliation in store for the wealthy and purse-proud Ronalds. In November, 1789 (some nine or ten years after the above verses were written), Burns writes to his brother William:—"The only Ayrshire news that I remember in which I think you will be interested, is that Mr. Ronald is bankrupt. You will easily guess, that from his insolent vanity in his sunshine of life, he will feel a little retaliation from those who thought themselves eclipsed by him."

[2] *Laird* is a title popularly applied in Scotland to a proprietor of lands or houses.

I lo'e her mysel', but darena weel tell, — love — dare not well
My poverty keeps me in awe, man,
For making o' rhymes, and working at times,
Does little or naething at a', man.

Yet I wadna choose to let her refuse, — would not
Nor hae't in her power to say na, man; — have it
For though I be poor, unnoticed, obscure,
My stomach's as proud as them a', man.

Though I canna ride in weel booted pride,
And flee o'er the hills like a craw, man, — fly — crow
I can haud up my head wi' the best o' the breed — hold
Though fluttering ever sae braw, man. — well-dressed

My coat and my vest, they are Scotch o' the best,
O' pairs o' guid breeks I hae twa, man, — breeches
And stockings and pumps to put on my stumps,
And ne'er a wrang steek in them a', man. — stitch

My sarks they are few, but five o' them new, — shirts
Twal' hundred[1] as white as the snaw, man,
A ten-shillings hat, a Holland cravat,
There's no mony poets sae braw, man. — well-dressed

I never had frien's weel-stockit in means,
To leave me a hundred or twa, man,
Nor weel tochered aunts, to wait on their drants, — dowered — drawling talk
And wish them in hell for it a', man.

I never was canny for hoarding o' money, — cautious
Or claughten't together at a', man; — clutching
I've little to spend, and naething to lend,
But deevil a shilling I awe, man. — owe

* * * * *

SONG—ON CESSNOCK BANKS.[2]

TUNE—"*If he be a Butcher neat and trim.*"

On Cessnock banks a lassie dwells,
Could I describe her shape and mien;
Our lasses a' she far excels,
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een!

[1] The technical name of a coarsish kind of linen, woven with 1200 warp-threads: coarser, therefore, than the "seventeen hunder" linen mentioned in "Tam o' Shanter."

[2] There are two versions of this song in existence. The one here given is that printed in Pickering's Aldine edition from the poet's own MS. The other is that published by Cromek in 1808, and stated by him to have been "recovered from the oral communication of a lady in Glasgow, whom the bard, early in life, dearly loved." This lady (said to have been the subject of the poem) was Ellison Begbie, the daughter of a small farmer in Galston parish, and was a servant with a family on the banks of the

She's sweeter than the morning dawn,
When rising Phœbus first is seen;
And dew-drops twinkle o'er the lawn;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

She's stately like yon youthful ash,
That grows the cowslip braes between,
And drinks the stream with vigour fresh;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

She's spotless like the flow'ring thorn,
With flow'rs so white and leaves so green,
When purest in the dewy morn;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her looks are like the vernal May,
When ev'ning Phœbus shines serene;
While birds rejoice in every spray;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her hair is like the curling mist
That climbs the mountain-sides at e'en,
When flow'r-reviving rains are past;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her forehead's like the show'ry bow,
When gleaming sunbeams intervene,
And gild the distant mountain's brow;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her cheeks are like yon crimson gem,
The pride of all the flowery scene,
Just opening on its thorny stem;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Cessnock, about two miles from the Burnses' farm of Lochlea at the time this song was written, that is when the poet was twenty-one years of age. Ellison was, according to Mrs. Begg (Burns's sister), the *belle-fille* who the poet says jilted him while he was at Irvine, after having promised to marry him, and for whom he evidently had a sincere respect. She married some years after, and went to Glasgow, but nothing is known of her subsequent life. Several letters to her from Burns may be found in editions that contain his Correspondence. She could hardly be described as beautiful: her charms lay in her mind, and in this respect she was so superior to the average maidens of her rank in life, that Burns, after his acquaintance with Edinburgh ladies, declared she was, of all the women he had ever seriously addressed, the one most likely to have formed an agreeable companion for life.—Cromek's version of the present piece opens thus:—

On Cessnock banks there lives a lass,
Could I describe her shape and mien;
The graces of her weel-faur'd face,
And the glacin' of her sparklin' een!

The concluding line in each of the following stanzas runs:—

An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

The fifth stanza reads:—

Her looks are like the sportive lamb
When flow'ry May adorns the scene,
That wantons round its bleating dam;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

There are some other slight variations, but what is of more importance is that Cromek's version wants two entire stanzas—the eighth and ninth. Stanza nine of the original has "teeth," apparently by a mere slip, as the lady's teeth are duly described in stanza eleven. We here follow Mr. Scott Douglas in giving "bosom's" instead.—So far as we are aware no tune is now known by such a name as that given under the title.

Her bosom's like the nightly snow,
When pale the morning rises keen;
While hid the murm'ring streamlets flow;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her lips are like yon cherries ripe,
That sunny walls from Boreas screen,—
They tempt the taste and charm the sight;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her teeth are like a flock of sheep,
With fleeces newly washen clean,
That slowly mount the rising steep;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her breath is like the fragrant breeze,
That gently stirs the blossom'd bean,
When Phœbus sinks behind the seas;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Her voice is like the ev'ning thrush,
That sings on Cessnock banks unseen;
While his mate sits nestling in the bush;
An' she has twa sparkling roguish een.

But it's not her air, her form, her face,
Tho' matching beauty's fabled queen,
'Tis the mind that shines in ev'ry grace,
An' chiefly in her roguish een.

SONG—HERE'S TO THY HEALTH, MY BONNIE LASS.[1]

TUNE—"*Laggan Burn.*"

Here's to thy health, my bonnie lass;
Guid night and joy be wi' thee;
I'll come nae mair[2] to thy bower-door,
To tell thee that I lo'e thee. love
O dinna think, my pretty pink, do not
But I can live without thee:
I vow and swear I dinna care
How lang ye look about ye.

[1] This has been often claimed as an early production of the poet, dating about 1780; later in life he is said to have revised it, and in the fifth volume of Johnson's *Museum* it appears as "written for this work by Robert Burns." We think it advisable to note, however, that the poet's sister, Mrs. Begg, states that it is one of those familiar ditties which were frequently sung at country firesides before her brother's lyrics became known, and its character is quite in accordance with this statement. The concluding four lines seem to have little connection with what goes before, and might justify the suspicion that more than one hand has been at the making of the song.

[2] Evidently "no more" would better suit the versification; but this is the reading of the *Museum*.

Thou'rt aye sae free informing me — always
Thou hast nae mind to marry;
I'll be as free informing thee
Nae time hae I to tarry.
I ken thy friends try ilka means, — every
Frae wedlock to delay thee,
Depending on some higher chance—
But fortune may betray thee.

I ken they scorn my low estate,
But that does never grieve me;
But I'm as free as any he;
Sma' siller will relieve me. — little money
I count my health my greatest wealth,
Sae long as I'll enjoy it:
I'll fear nae scant, I'll bode nae want,
As lang's I get employment.

But far-off fowls hae feathers fair,
And aye until ye try them:
Tho' they seem fair still have a care,
They may prove as bad as I am.
But at twal at night, when the moon shines bright, — twelve
My dear I'll come and see thee;
For the man that lo'es his mistress weel
Nae travel makes him weary.

SONG—BONNIE PEGGY ALISON.[1]

TUNE—"*The Braes o' Balquidder.*"[2]

Burns had even thus early in his career (about 1780 or 1781), begun to eke out the remains of the old lyrics of his country. The chorus is all that in this instance he has deemed worthy of preservation. It belongs to an old song whose indelicacy seems to have condemned it to the uncertain keeping of the memories of men.

I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
An' I'll kiss thee o'er again,
An' I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
My bonnie Peggy Alison.

Ilk care and fear, when thou art near, — every
I ever mair defy them, O;
Young kings upon their hansel throne — newly attained
Are no sae blest as I am, O!
I'll kiss thee yet, &c.

[1] The heroine of this song was Ellison, or Alison Begbie, in whose praise was also composed "On Cessnock banks" (see above). It is also supposed that she inspired the charming "Mary Morison."

[2] This tune is now more popularly connected with "I'm o'er young to marry yet."

When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure, O;
I seek nae mair o' heaven to share, no more
Than sic a moment's pleasure, O! such
I'll kiss thee yet, &c.

And by thy een, sae bonnie blue,
I swear I'm thine for ever, O!
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never, O.
I'll kiss thee yet, &c.

SONG—MARY MORISON.[1]

TUNE—"*Bide ye yet.*'

In a letter to Thomson, the poet styles this, "one of my juvenile works," and it is inferred from a note of his brother Gilbert's that the heroine was Ellison Begbie. See note to preceding song.

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour! appointed
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor!
How blythely wad I bide the stoure, dust
A weary slave frae sun to sun;
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen, when, to the trembling string, last night
The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha', went
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard nor saw:
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw, well-dressed
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only faut is loving thee? whose fault
If love for love thou wilt na gie, not give
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.

[1] "Of all the productions of Burns the pathetic and serious love songs, which he left behind him, in the manner of old ballads, are, perhaps, those which take the deepest and most lasting hold of the mind. Such are the lines to 'Mary Morison.'"—HAZLITT.

The tune to which Burns composed the song, as intimated above, was "Bide ye yet." In Thomson's collection it is set to an air called "The Glasgow Lasses," arranged by Beethoven. Wilson, the famous Scottish vocalist, sang it to a melody called "The Miller," and this is now a more popular setting than any of the others.

A PRAYER

UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH.

"There was a certain period of my life that my spirit was broke by repeated losses and disasters which threatened, and, indeed, effected the utter ruin of my fortune. My body, too, was attacked by that most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria or confirmed melancholy; in this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the willow trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following."—BURNS'S COMMON-PLACE BOOK, March, 1784. It was probably written about the same time as the next piece.

O Thou Great Being! what Thou art
  Surpasses me to know:
Yet sure I am, that known to Thee
  Are all Thy works below.

Thy creature here before Thee stands,
  All wretched and distrest;
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul
  Obey Thy high behest.

Sure Thou, Almighty, canst not act
  From cruelty or wrath!
O, free my weary eyes from tears,
  Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,
  To suit some wise design;
Then man my soul with firm resolves
  To bear and not repine.

WINTER—A DIRGE.[1]

"There is something," says the poet in his Common-place Book, April, 1784, "even in the

Mighty tempest, and the hoary waste
Abrupt and deep, stretch'd o'er the buried earth,—

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to every thing great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear a stormy wind howling among the trees and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to *Him*, who, in the pompous language of Scripture, 'walks on the wings of the wind.' In one of these seasons, just after a tract of misfortunes [probably about the end of 1781], I composed the following song—tune, 'MacPherson's Farewell.'"

The wintry west extends his blast,
  And hail and rain does blaw;
Or the stormy north sends driving forth
  The blinding sleet and snaw:
While tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
  And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest
  And pass the heartless day.

[1] In 1787 the poet notes this as being the oldest of his then printed pieces.

"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,"[1]
The joyless winter-day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May:
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join,
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine!

Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme
Those woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest, they must be best,
Because they are Thy will!
Then all I want (O, do thou grant
This one request of mine!)
Since to enjoy thou dost deny,
Assist me to resign.

A PRAYER

IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

"This prayer was composed," says Burns, "when fainting fits, and other alarming symptoms of pleurisy, or some other dangerous disorder, first put nature on the alarm." It was, therefore, probably written during his short and unfortunate sojourn at Irvine in 1781.

O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wander'd in those paths
Of life I ought to shun;
As something, loudly, in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done;

Thou know'st that Thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong;
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,
Or frailty stept aside,
Do Thou, All-Good! for such Thou art,
In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have err'd,
No other plea I have,
But, Thou art good; and goodness still
Delighteth to forgive.

[1] Dr. Young.—R. B.

STANZAS

ON THE SAME OCCASION.[1]

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between:
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms:
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;
I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath His sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, "Forgive my foul offence!"
Fain promise never more to disobey;
But, should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might desert fair virtue's way;
Again in folly's path might go astray:
Again exalt the brute and sink the man;
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?
Who sin so oft have mourn'd, yet to temptation ran?

O Thou, great Governor of all below!
If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
Or still the tumult of the raging sea:
With that controlling power assist even me,
Those headlong furious passions to confine;
For all unfit I feel my powers to be,
To rule their torrent in th' allowed line;
O, aid me with Thy help, Omnipotence Divine!

PARAPHRASE OF THE FIRST PSALM.

This and the poetical version of the Ninetieth Psalm following were probably written about the same period as the three preceding pieces, the winter of 1781–82.

The man, in life wherever plac'd,
Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wicked's way,
Nor learns their guilty lore!

[1] These "Stanzas" seem to have been written about the same time as the "Prayer" preceding, and the piece was apparently a favourite with the author, who gave it some polishing before inserting it in the Edinburgh edition of 1787. In his Common-place Book it was entitled, "Misgivings in the Hour of Despondency and Prospect of Death;" in the Stair manuscript, into which he afterwards copied the poem, he altered this to "Misgivings of Despondency on the Approach of the Gloomy Monarch of the Grave."

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
Still walks before his God.

That man shall flourish like the trees
Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high,
And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt
Shall to the ground be cast,
And like the rootless stubble, tost
Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that God the good adore
Hath giv'n them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
Shall ne'er be truly blest.

THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINETIETH PSALM PARAPHRASED.

Probably, like the above, written in winter, 1781-82.

O Thou, the first, the greatest friend
Of all the human race!
Whose strong right hand has ever been
Their stay and dwelling place!

Before the mountains heav'd their heads
Beneath Thy forming hand,
Before this pond'rous globe itself
Arose at Thy command:

That power which rais'd and still upholds
This universal frame,
From countless, unbeginning time,
Was ever still the same.

Those mighty periods of years
Which seem to us so vast,
Appear no more before Thy sight
Than yesterday that's past.

Thou giv'st the word: Thy creature, man,
Is to existence brought:
Again Thou say'st, "Ye sons of men,
Return ye into nought!"

Thou layest them, with all their cares,
In everlasting sleep;
As with a flood Thou tak'st them off
With overwhelming sweep.

They flourish like the morning flower,
In beauty's pride array'd;
But long ere night cut down, it lies
All wither'd and decay'd.

SONG—RAGING FORTUNE.

A FRAGMENT.

This song was composed about 1781 or 1782, under the pressure of a heavy train of those misfortunes to which the youth of Burns was subject. "'Twas at the same time," says he in the first Common-place Book, referring to the close of one of these "dreadful periods," as he calls them, "I set about composing an air in the old Scotch style. I am not musical scholar enough to prick down my tune properly, so it can never see the light, and perhaps 'tis no great matter; but the following were the verses I composed to suit it. The tune consisted of three parts, so that the above verses just went through the whole air."

O raging Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low, O![1]
O raging Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low, O!

My stem was fair, my bud was green,
My blossom sweet did blow, O;
The dew fell fresh, the sun rose mild,
And made my branches grow, O.

But luckless Fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low, O;
But luckless Fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low, O.

SONG, IN THE CHARACTER OF A RUINED FARMER.[2]

TUNE—"*Go from my window, Love, do.*"

The sun he is sunk in the west,
All creatures retirèd to rest,
While here I sit, all sore beset,
With sorrow, grief and woe:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

[1] The recurrence of this O at the end of each alternate line is a decided blemish. Readers had better consider it omitted.

[2] There can be little doubt that the "Ruined Farmer" was the poet's father, whose unavailing struggles against misfortune were brought to a close in February, 1784.

The prosperous man is asleep,
Nor hears how the whirlwinds sweep;
But Misery and I must watch
The surly tempest blow:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

There lies the dear partner of my breast,
Her cares for a moment at rest:
Must I see thee, my youthful pride,
Thus brought so very low?
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

There lie my sweet babes in her arms;
No anxious fear their little hearts alarms;
But for their sake my heart does ache
With many a bitter throe:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

I once was by Fortune caressed,
I once could relieve the distressed,
Now life's poor support hardly earned
My fate will scarce bestow:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

No comfort, no comfort I have!
How welcome to me were the grave!
But then my wife and children dear—
O, whither would they go?
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

O whither, O whither shall I turn,
All friendless, forsaken, forlorn?
For in this world, rest and peace
I never more shall know!
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

SONG—MY FATHER WAS A FARMER.

TUNE—"*The Weaver and his Shuttle, O.*"

"The following song," says Burns, in the Common-place Book already referred to, "is a wild rhapsody, miserably deficient in versification; but as the sentiments are the genuine feelings of my heart, for that reason I have a particular pleasure in conning it over." It was written probably about 1781–82.

My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border, O,
And carefully he bred me in decency and order, O:
He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne'er a farthing, O,
For without an honest manly heart, no man was worth regarding, O.

Then out into the world my course I did determine, O,
Tho' to be rich was not my wish, yet to be great was charming, O.

My talents they were not the worst; nor yet my education, O;
Resolved was I, at least to try, to mend my situation, O.

In many a way, and vain essay, I courted Fortune's favour, O;
Some cause unseen still stept between, to frustrate each endeavour, O;
Sometimes by foes I was o'erpower'd; sometimes by friends forsaken, O;
And when my hope was at the top, I still was worst mistaken, O.

Then sore harass'd, and tir'd at last, with Fortune's vain delusion, O;
I dropt my schemes, like idle dreams, and came to this conclusion, O;
The past was bad, and the future hid; its good or ill untrièd, O;
But the present hour was in my pow'r, and so I would enjoy it, O.

No help, nor hope, nor view had I; nor person to befriend me, O;
So I must toil, and sweat, and broil, and labour to sustain me, O,
To plough and sow, to reap and mow, my father bred me early, O;
For one, he said, to labour bred, was a match for Fortune fairly, O.

Thus all obscure, unknown, and poor, thro' life I'm doomed to wander, O,
Till down my weary bones I lay in everlasting slumber, O:
No view nor care, but shun whate'er might breed me pain or sorrow, O;
I live to-day, as well's I may, regardless of to-morrow, O.

But cheerful still, I am as well as a monarch in a palace, O,
Tho' Fortune's frown still hunts me down, with all her wonted malice, O;
I make indeed, my daily bread, but ne'er can make it farther, O;
But as daily bread is all I need, I do not much regard her, O.

When sometimes by my labour I earn a little money, O,
Some unforeseen misfortune comes generally upon me, O;
Mischance, mistake, or by neglect, or my good-natur'd folly, O;
But come what will, I've sworn it still, I'll ne'er be melancholy, O.

All you who follow wealth and power with unremitting ardour, O,
The more in this you look for bliss, you leave your view the farther, O;
Had you the wealth Potosi boasts, or nations to adore you, O,
A cheerful honest-hearted clown I will prefer before you, O.

EXTEMPORE VERSES—"I'LL GO AND BE A SODGER."

"Come, stubborn pride and unshrinking resolution, accompany me through this, to me, miserable world. Your friendship I think I can count on though I should date my letters from a marching regiment. I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn hope."—BURNS TO MISS CHALMERS, Jan. 22, 1788. Dr. Currie gives April, 1782, as the date of this impromptu. It is transcribed in the book of blank paper, into which it was the poet's expressed intention of entering farm memorandums when he occupied Mossgiel farm in March, 1784.

O why the deuce should I repine,
And be an ill foreboder?
I'm twenty-three, and five feet nine—
I'll go and be a sodger.

I gat some gear wi' meikle care, — got means
I held it weel thegither; — together
But now it's gane, and something mair— — more
I'll go and be a sodger.

SONG—THE CURE FOR ALL CARE.

TUNE—"*Prepare, my dear brethren, to the tavern let's fly.*"

These lines were probably written about 1782, some months after Burns had been passed and raised as a freemason. He apparently modelled the song (such as it is) on a Bacchanalian ditty in *Yair's Charmer* (1751), the concluding line of one of whose stanzas runs:

And a big-bellied bottle's a mighty good thing.

No churchman am I for to rail and to write,
No statesman nor soldier to plot or to fight,
No sly man of business contriving to snare,—
For a big-belly'd bottle's the whole of my care.

The peer I don't envy, I give him his bow;
I scorn not the peasant, tho' ever so low;
But a club of good fellows, like those that are here,
And a bottle like this, are my glory and care.

Here passes the squire on his brother—his horse;
There centum per centum, the cit, with his purse;
But see you The Crown how it waves in the air!
There, a big-belly'd bottle still eases my care.

The wife of my bosom, alas! she did die;
For sweet consolation to church I did fly;
I found that old Solomon provèd it fair,
That a big-belly'd bottle's a cure for all care.

I once was persuaded a venture to make;
A letter inform'd me that all was to wreck;—
But the pursy old landlord just waddled up stairs,
With a glorious bottle that ended my cares.

"Life's cares they are comforts,"[1] a maxim laid down
By the bard, what d'ye call him, that wore the black gown;
And, faith, I agree with th' old prig to a hair;
For a big-belly'd bottle's a heaven of care.

Added in a Mason Lodge.

Then fill up a bumper and make it o'erflow,
And honours masonic prepare for to throw;
May every true brother of the compass and square,
Have a big-belly'd bottle when harass'd with care.

[1] Young's "Night Thoughts."—R. B.

JOHN BARLEYCORN.

A BALLAD.

This ballad, probably produced in 1782, was copied into the first Common-place Book, under date of June, 1785, with the following incomplete note: "I once heard the old song, that goes by this name, sung; and being very fond of it, and remembering only two or three verses of it, viz.: the 1st, 2d, and 3d, with some scraps which I have interwoven here and there in the following piece. . . ." The old ballad is given in Jamieson's *Popular Ballads* (1806) from his own recollection as a boy.

There was three kings into the east,[1]
Three kings both great and high,
An' they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn should die.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,
Put clods upon his head,
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead.

But the cheerful spring came kindly on,
And show'rs began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
And sore surprised them all.

The sultry suns of summer came,
And he grew thick and strong,
His head weel arm'd wi' pointed spears,
That no one should him wrong.

The sober autumn enter'd mild,
When he grew wan and pale;
His bending joints and drooping head
Show'd he began to fail.

His colour sicken'd more and more,
He faded into age;
And then his enemies began
To show their deadly rage.

They've ta'en a weapon long and sharp,
And cut him by the knee;
Then tied him fast upon a cart,
Like a rogue for forgerie.

They laid him down upon his back,
And cudgell'd him full sore;
They hung him up before the storm,
And turn'd him o'er and o'er.

They fillèd up a darksome pit
With water to the brim,

[1] Burns always gave this line with *was*. The *was* has an antique ring with it which *were* has not; but many of his editors prefer the less characteristic and less Scotch form.

They heavèd in John Barleycorn,
There let him sink or swim.

They laid him out upon the floor,
To work him further wo,
And still, as signs of life appear'd,
They toss'd him to and fro.

They wasted, o'er a scorching flame,
The marrow of his bones;
But a miller us'd him worst of all,
For he crush'd him 'tween two stones.

And they hae ta'en his very heart's blood,
And drank it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
Their joy did more abound.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
Of noble enterprise,
For if you do but taste his blood,
'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his wo;
'Twill heighten all his joy:
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
Tho' the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great posterity
Ne'er fail in old Scotland![1]

THE DEATH AND DYING WORDS OF POOR MAILIE,

THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE.

AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

"He had, partly by way of frolic, bought a ewe and two lambs from a neighbour, and she was tethered in a field adjoining the house at Lochlea. He and I were going out with our teams, and our two younger brothers to drive for us at mid-day, when Hugh Wilson, a curious-looking awkward boy, clad in plaiding, came to us with much anxiety in his face, with the information that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether and was lying in the ditch. Robert was much tickled with Hughoc's appearance and postures on the occasion. Poor Mailie was set to rights, and when we returned from the plough in the evening, he repeated to me her 'Death and Dying Words,' pretty much in the way they now stand."—GILBERT BURNS.

As Mailie, an' her lambs thegither,	together
Were ae day nibbling on the tether,	one
Upon her cloot she coost a hitch,	hoof cast a loop
An' ower she warsled in the ditch:	struggled

[1] The version copied into the Common-place Book contains many unrhythmic lines; the author's improved version, published in the first Edinburgh edition of 1787, is what we have followed.

There, groaning, dying, she did lie,
When Hughoc[1] he came doytin by. walking stupidly

Wi' glowrin' een, an' lifted han's, staring eyes
Poor Hughoc like a statue stan's;
He saw her days were near-hand ended, nearly
But, wae's my heart! he could na mend it! woe is
He gapèd wide, but naething spak!
At length Poor Mailie silence brak.

"O thou, whase lamentable face
Appears to mourn my woefu' case!
My dying words attentive hear,
An' bear them to my master dear.

"Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear as buy a sheep, much money
O, bid him never tie them mair more
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!
But ca' them out to park or hill, drive field
And let them wander at their will;
So may his flock increase, an' grow
To scores o' lambs, an' packs o' woo'!

"Tell him, he was a master kin',
An' aye was guid to me and mine; always
An' now my dying charge I gie him, give
My helpless lambs I trust them wi' him.

"O, bid him save their harmless lives,
Frae dogs, an' tods, an' butchers' knives! foxes
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel': provide for
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn, tend
Wi' teats o' hay an' ripps o' corn. tufts handfuls

"An' may they never learn the gaets ways
Of ither vile wanrestfu' pets! restless
To slink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal, gaps in fences
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail. colewort plants
So may they, like their great forbears, forefathers
For monie a year come thro' the shears:
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
An' bairns greet for them when they're dead. weep

"My poor toop-lamb, my son an' heir, tup
O, bid him breed him up wi' care!
An', if he live to be a beast,
To pit some havins in his breast! put good manners

[1] A neibor herd-callan [neighbour herd-boy] about three-fourths as wise as other folk.—R. B. *Hughoc* is the familiar diminutive of *Hugh*.

An' warn him, what I winna name,
To stay content wi' yowes at hame; ewes
An' no to rin an' wear his cloots, run hoofs
Like ither menseless, graceless brutes. unmannered

"An' niest my yowie, silly thing, next
Gude keep thee frae a tether string!
O, may thou ne'er forgather up keep company
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop;
But aye keep mind to moop an' mell, to associate
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel![1]

"And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath,
I lea'e my blessing wi' you baith: both
An' when you think upo' your Mither,
Mind to be kind to ane anither. one another

"Now, honest Hughoc, dinna fail, do not
To tell my master a' my tale;
An' bid him burn this cursed tether,
An', for thy pains, thou'se get my blether." bladder

This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head,
An' clos'd her een amang the dead. eyes

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY.

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears trickling down your nose, salt
Our bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead! all remedy
The last sad cape-stane of his woes; cope-stone
Poor Mailie's dead!

It's no the loss o' warl's gear, world's wealth
That could sae bitter draw the tear,
Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear melancholy
The mourning weed:
He's lost a friend and neibor dear, neighbour
In Mailie dead.

Thro' a' the town she trotted by him; "town" = farm
A lang half-mile she could descry him;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed:

[1] "The expiring animal's admonitions touching the education of the 'poor toop-lamb her son and heir,' and the 'yowie, silly thing,' her daughter, are from the same peculiar vein of sly homely wit, imbedded upon fancy, which he afterwards dug with a bolder hand in the 'Twa Dogs,' and perhaps to its utmost depth in his 'Death and Dr. Hornbook.'"—J. G. LOCKHART.

A friend mair faithfu' ne'er came nigh him, more
Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense, wot
An' could behave hersel' wi' mense: decorum
I'll say't, she never brak a fence,
Thro' thievish greed.
Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence parlour
Sin' Mailie's dead.

Or, if he wanders up the howe, hollow
Her living image in her yowe, ewe
Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe, hillock
For bits o' bread;
An' down the briny pearls rowe roll
For Mailie dead.

She was nae get o' moorland tips, offspring rams
Wi' tawted ket, an' hairy hips; matted fleece
For her forbears were brought in ships forefathers
Frae yont the Tweed: from beyond
A bonnier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips shears
Than Mailie dead.[1]

Wae worth the man wha first did shape
That vile, wanchancie thing—a rape! unlucky rope
It maks guid fellows girn an' gape, grin
Wi' chokin' dread;
An Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape,
For Mailie dead.

O, a' ye bards on bonnie Doon!
An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
Come, join the melancholious croon
O' Robin's reed!
His heart will never get aboon above
His Mailie dead.[2]

[1] Original MS.

She was nae get o' runted rams, ill-bred
Wi' woo like goats and legs like trams, cart-shafts
She was the flower o' Fairlie lambs
A famous breed;
Now Robin, greetin', chows the hams chews
O' Mailie dead.

[2] "But a tenderer sportfulness dwells in him, and comes forth here and there in evanescent and beautiful touches, as in his Address to the Mouse,' or to the 'Farmer's Mare,' or in his 'Elegy on Poor Mailie, which last may be reckoned his happiest effort of this kind. In these pieces there are traits of a humour as fine as that of Sterne, yet altogether different, original, and peculiar—the humour of Burns."—THOMAS CARLYLE.

SONG—THE RIGS O' BARLEY.

TUNE—"*Corn Rigs are bonnie.*"

In the copy of Johnson's *Museum* annotated for Captain Riddell of Glenriddell Burns writes: "All the old words that ever I could meet with to this air were the following, which seems to have been an old chorus:—

O corn rigs and rye rigs,
O corn rigs are bonnie;
And whene'er you meet a bonny lass,
Preen up her cockernony."[1]

It was upon a Lammas night,
When corn rigs are bonnie, ridges
Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
I held away to Annie:
The time flew by wi' tentless heed, careless
Till 'tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion, she agreed
To see me thro' the barley.

Corn rigs, an' barley rigs,
An' corn rigs are bonnie:
I'll ne'er forget that happy night,
Amang the rigs wi' Annie.[2]

The sky was blue, the wind was still,
The moon was shining clearly:
I set her down, wi' right good will,
Amang the rigs o' barley:
I ken't her heart was a' my ain: knew own
I lov'd her most sincerely;
I kiss'd her owre and owre again, over
Amang the rigs o' barley.
Corn rigs, &c.

I lock'd her in my fond embrace;
Her heart was beating rarely:
My blessings on that happy place,
Amang the rigs o' barley!
But by the moon and stars so bright,
That shone that hour so clearly!
She aye shall bless that happy night, always
Amang the rigs o' barley.
Corn rigs, &c.

[1] The following lines occur in Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd:"—

He kiss'd and vow'd he wad be mine,
And loo'd me best of ony;
That gars me like to sing sinsyne
O corn rigs are bonnie.

The melody is very old.

[2] The "Annie" celebrated in this song has been differently identified with Annie Blair and Annie Ronald, both daughters of farmers in Tarbolton parish. But it could hardly be the latter, whom Burns worshipped at a distance, as hinted in the "Ronalds of the Bennals." Anne Rankine of Adamhill (daughter of "rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine," the poet's friend, see p. 38), boasted throughout life that she was the heroine of this more warm than delicate effusion. The song was probably written in 1783. The last stanza used to be instanced by the bard as one of the triumphs of his art.

I ha'e been blythe wi' comrades dear;
I ha'e been merry drinkin';
I ha'e been joyfu' gatherin' gear; wealth
I ha'e been happy thinkin':
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Tho' three times doubled fairly,
That happy night was worth them a',
Amang the rigs o' barley.
Corn rigs, &c.

SONG—PEGGY.[1]

TUNE—"*I had a horse, I had nae mair.*"

This poem Burns heads as "Song, composed in August." Johnson mistakenly states that it was written for his *Musical Museum*; it appeared before the publication of that work, in the Kilmarnock edition of the poems.

Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns westerly
Bring autumn's pleasant weather;
And the moorcock springs, on whirring wings, grouse
Amang the blooming heather;
Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain,
Delights the weary farmer;
And the moon shines bright, when I rove at night,
To muse upon my charmer.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells; upland fields
The plover loves the mountains;
The woodcock haunts the lonely dells;
The soaring hern the fountains:
Thro' lofty groves the cushat roves,
The path of man to shun it;
The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,
The spreading thorn the linnet.

Thus ev'ry kind their pleasure find,
The savage and the tender;
Some social join, and leagues combine;
Some solitary wander:
Avaunt, away, the cruel sway!
Tyrannic man's dominion;
The sportsman's joy, the murd'ring cry,
The flutt'ring, gory pinion!

[1] The Peggy of this lyric was undoubtedly Margaret Thomson of Kirkoswald, the "*fillette*" who put an end by her fascinations to the amorous young poet's trigonometrical studies. It appears to have been written, however, subsequently to the time when he was staying at Kirkoswald, and on an occasion when he had again come under the influence of the same charmer, probably in 1783. See note to next song. A draft of a portion of the song was copied into the first Common-place Book.

But Peggy dear, the evening's clear,
Thick flies the skimming swallow;
The sky is blue, the fields in view,
All fading-green and yellow:
Come let us stray our gladsome way,
And view the charms of nature;
The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,
And every happy creature.

We'll gently walk, and sweetly talk,
Till the silent moon shine clearly;
I'll grasp thy waist, and, fondly prest,
Swear how I love thee dearly:
Not vernal show'rs to budding flow'rs,
Not autumn to the farmer,
So dear can be as thou to me,
My fair, my lovely charmer!

SONG—MY NANNIE, O.[1]

TUNE—"*My Nannie, O.*"

"Shenstone observes finely that love verses writ without any passion are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of love composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along a miserable dupe to Love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill in distinguishing FOPPERY and CONCEIT from real PASSION and NATURE. Whether the following song will stand the test I will not pretend to say, because it is MY OWN; only I can say it was, at the time, REAL."—BURNS, Common-place Book, April, 1784. The song was probably written about 1783, but was subsequently revised.

Behind yon hills, where Lugar[2] flows,
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
And I'll awa to Nannie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud and shill; western shrill
The night's baith mirk an' rainy, O; both dark

[1] The heroine of this song was, according to Gilbert, the poet's brother, "a farmer's daughter in Tarbolton parish, named Fleming, to whom the poet paid some of that roving attention which he was continually devoting to some one. Her charms were, indeed, mediocre, and what she had were sexual, which, indeed, was the characteristic of the greater part of his mistresses." [Letter to George Thomson, 3d June, 1819.] It should be added, however, that Mrs. Begg, the poet's sister, gives the honour of having inspired the song to Peggy Thomson, the Kirkoswald *fillette*, on whom the preceding song was composed.

[2] In all editions of Burns's works up to and including that of 1794, Stinchar (or Stinsiar) stood in the place of Lugar. The latter name was thought more euphonious, and the author sanctioned the alteration in 1792, as appears from his letter to George Thomson, dated 26th October of that year: "In the printed copy of 'My Nannie O' the name of the river is horridly prosaic. I will alter it,

Behind yon hills where {Girvan / Lugar} flows.

'Girvan' is the name of the river that suits the idea of the stanza best, 'Lugar' is the most agreeable modulation of syllables."

The Lugar is a tributary of the Ayr. Like its principal, it pursues its way for some miles through a deep chasm in the red sandstone of the district, and "moors and mosses" are hardly a special feature of its course. The Girvan and Stinchar, lying farther to the south, both much longer than the Lugar, traverse moors and mosses in their upper courses at least.

But I'll get my plaid, an' out I'll steal,
  An' owre the hills to Nannie, O. — over

My Nannie's charming, sweet, an' young:
  Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
  That wad beguile my Nannie, O. — would

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
  She's spotless as she's bonnie, O:
The op'ning gowan, wet wi' dew, — daisy
  Nae purer is than Nannie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
  And few there be that ken me, O; — know
But what care I how few they be?
  I'm welcome aye to Nannie, O.

My riches a' 's my penny-fee, — wages
  An' I maun guide it cannie, O; — must use it carefully
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me, — world's wealth
  My thoughts are a' my Nannie, O.

Our auld guidman delights to view — old farmer
  His sheep and kye thrive bonnie, O; — kine
But I'm as blythe that hauds his pleugh, — holds
  An' has nae care but Nannie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by, — do not care
  I'll tak' what Heav'n will sen' me, O;
Nae ither care in life have I, — other
  But live, an' love my Nannie, O.[1]

SONG—WHA IS THAT AT MY BOWER DOOR?[2]

TUNE—"*Lass, an' I come near thee.*"

Wha is that at my bower door?
  (O wha is it but Findlay.)
Then gae your gate, ye's nae be here! — go your way, you shall not
  (Indeed maun I, quo' Findlay.) — must

[1] In the version of this natural and touching lyric which its author copied into his Common-place Book, the following chorus appears:—

> And O my bonny Nannie O,
> My young, my handsome Nannie O,
> Tho' I had the world all at my will,
> I would give it all for Nannie O.

Subsequently his more matured taste suppressed it.

[2] This song was communicated by Burns to the fourth volume of Johnson's *Museum*. Cromek says Gilbert Burns told him that "this song was suggested to his brother by the 'Auld Man's Address to the Widow' ['The Auld Man's Best Argument'] printed in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*, which the poet first heard sung before he had seen that collection, by Jean Wilson, a silly old widow woman, then living at Tarbolton, remarkable for the simplicity and *naïveté* of her character, and for singing old Scots songs with a peculiar energy and earnestness of manner." We may add that the resemblance between the two songs is of the very slightest character.

What mak ye, sae like a thief?
(O come and see, quo' Findlay.)
Before the morn ye'll work mischief.
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)

Gif I rise and let you in—
(Let me in, quo' Findlay.)
Ye'll keep me waukin' wi' your din. awake
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)
In my bower if ye should stay—
(Let me stay, quo' Findlay.)
I fear ye'll bide till break o' day.
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)

Here this night, if ye remain,—
(I'll remain, quo' Findlay.)
I dread ye'll learn the gate again. way
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)
What may pass within this bower,—
(Let it pass, quo' Findlay.)
Ye maun conceal till your last hour.
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay!)

SONG—GREEN GROW THE RASHES.[1]

TUNE—"*Green grow the rashes.*"

In the first Common-place Book after two paragraphs of not very profound moralizing, in which mankind generally are divided into two classes, the GRAVE and the MERRY, the poet winds up: "The foregoing was to have been an elaborate dissertation on the various species of men, but as I cannot please myself on the arrangement of my ideas on the subject, I must wait till further experience and nicer observations throw more light on the subject. In the meantime I shall set down the following fragment, which as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable anybody to determine which of the classes I belong to." The date of its entry in the Common-place Book is Aug. 1784, but it was said to have been written before this, when Burns was at Lochlea. The last stanza was added at a later period.

Green grow the rashes, O! rushes
Green grow the rashes, O!
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
Are spent amang the lasses, O.

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In ev'ry hour that passes, O:
What signifies the life o' man,
An 'twere na for the lasses, O?
Green grow, &c.

[1] This light-hearted effusion was modelled on a spirited old song bearing the same title and having a similar chorus. It was a great favourite of our ancestors, and the air belonging to it is, according to Robert Chambers, "one of the oldest which have been handed down to us." The old song contains here and there a freedom of touch indicating the hand of a master:—

We're a' dry wi' drinking o't,
We're a' dry wi' drinking o't;
The parson kiss'd the fiddler's wife,
An' he could na preach for thinking o't.

The war'ly race may riches chase, worldly
An' riches still may fly them, O;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.
Green grow, &c.

But gie me a canny hour at e'en, quiet
My arms about my dearie, O;
An' war'ly cares, and war'ly men,
May a' gae tapsalteerie, O! topsy-turvy
Green grow, &c.

For you sae douce, ye sneer at this, grave
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw, world
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.
Green grow, &c.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O:
Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O.[1]
Green grow, &c.

REMORSE—A FRAGMENT.[2]

"I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher Mr. Smith, in his excellent *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, that Remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well, under those calamities in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand; but when our own follies or crimes have made us miserable and wretched, to bear it up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct—this is a glorious effort of self-command."—COMMON-PLACE BOOK, Sept. 1783.

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace—
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
By our own folly or our guilt brought on;
In ev'ry other circumstance, the mind
Has this to say: "It was no deed of mine:"
But, when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added: "Blame thy foolish self!"
Or worser far, the pangs of keen Remorse,
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt—

[1] The conceit contained in this verse (as pointed out by several editors) is found thus expressed in a comedy called *Cupid's Whirligig*, published in 1607:—

Since we were made before you, should we not love and admire you as the last, and, therefore, perfect work of Nature? Man was made when nature was but an apprentice, but woman when she was a skilful mistress of her art.

In all likelihood Burns never saw this drama, but an extract including those lines was introduced into a work entitled *The British Muse, a Collection of Thoughts, by Thomas Hayward*, 4 vols. Lond. 1738, which had a pretty wide circulation in his time.

[2] The present piece was copied into the poet's first Common-place Book under date September, 1783. The lines are probably a lamentation over his follies and dissipations at Irvine.

Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involved others,
The young, the innocent, who fondly lov'd us;
Nay more, that very love the cause of ruin!
O burning hell! in all thy store of torments
There's not a keener lash.
Lives there a man so firm, who while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime
Can reason down its agonising throbs;
And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace?
O happy, happy, enviable man!
O glorious magnanimity of soul!

EPITAPH—FOR THE AUTHOR'S FATHER.

These lines are engraved on the humble headstone in Alloway Kirkyard, over the grave of William Burness, the poet's father, who died at Lochlea, 13th February, 1784. The epitaph received careful elaboration at the hand of Burns. The first line, so happily expressed, was preceded by at least two readings, found in the poet's handwriting:—

O ye who sympathize with virtue's pains—

for which the writer himself suggested the substitution of

O ye whose hearts deceasèd merit pains—

each of which is conspicuously inferior to the line as we have it.

O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious rev'rence and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the gen'rous friend;
The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
"For ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side."[1]

EPITAPH—ON A FRIEND.

An honest man here lies at rest,
As e'er God with his image blest;
The friend of man, the friend of truth;
The friend of age, and guide of youth:

Few hearts like his with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd;
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;
If there is none, he made the best of this.[2]

[1] Goldsmith.

[2] In Burns's original Common-place Book the above is headed thus:—"Epitaph on my own friend, and my father's friend, William Muir in Tarbolton Mill." This is the "Willie" of "Willie's Mill" in "Death and Dr. Hornbook."

EPITAPH—ON A CELEBRATED RULING ELDER.[1]

Here souter Hood in death does sleep;—
To h—ll, if he's gane thither,
Satan, gie him thy gear to keep, money
He'll haud it weel thegither. hold it well together

BALLAD ON THE AMERICAN WAR.

A FRAGMENT.[2]

TUNE—"*Killiecrankie.*"

When Guilford good our pilot stood,
And did our hellim thraw, man, helm turn
Ae night, at tea, began a plea, one quarrel
Within America, man:
Then up they gat the maskin'-pat, got tea-pot
And in the sea did jaw, man; dash
An' did nae less, in full congress,
Than quite refuse our law, man.

Then thro' the lakes Montgomery takes,
I wat he was nae slaw, man; not slow
Down Lowrie's burn[3] he took a turn,
And Carleton did ca', man: drive
But yet, what-reck, he, at Quebec, nevertheless
Montgomery-like did fa', man, fall
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,
Amang his en'mies a', man.

Poor Tammy Gage, within a cage
Was kept at Boston ha', man; hall
Till Willie Howe took o'er the knowe knoll
For Philadelphia, man:
Wi' sword an' gun he thought a sin
Guid Christian blood to draw, man;
But at New-York, wi' knife an' fork,
Sir-loin he hackèd sma', man.

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur an' whip, went
Till Fraser brave did fa', man;
Then lost his way, ae misty day,
In Saratoga shaw, man. wood

[1] Not a Mauchline elder, and persecutor of Gavin Hamilton, as has been supposed, but a Tarbolton elder, of most penurious habits, named William Hood, by trade a "souter" or shoemaker.

[2] When Dr. Blair read this ballad he remarked that "Burns's politics smèlt of the smithy." It was written probably early in 1784, but first published in the Edinburgh edition of 1787, and only after the Earl of Glencairn, and the Hon. Henry Erskine, then Dean of Faculty, had given their approval. The letter written by Burns to Erskine in this connection was first printed in the *Ayr Observer*, October, 1846. The personal and historical allusions are familiar to all who have studied the history of that interesting period, with its galaxy of great statesmen and orators, and its struggles pregnant with such mighty and unforeseen issues.

[3] The *burn*, *i.e.* river of Lawrence, the St. Lawrence.

Cornwallis fought as long 's he dought, was able
An' did the Buckskins[1] claw, man;
But Clinton's glaive frae rust to save,
He hung it to the wa', man. wall

Then Montague, an' Guilford too,
Began to fear a fa', man;
And Sackville doure, wha stood the stoure, stubborn dust (of battle)
The German chief to thraw, man: thwart
For Paddy Burke, like ony Turk,
Nae mercy had at a', man;
And Charlie Fox threw by the box,
An' lows'd his tinkler jaw,[2] man.

Then Rockingham took up the game
Till death did on him ca', man; call
When Shelburne meek held up his cheek
Conform to gospel law, man;
Saint Stephen's boys, wi' jarring noise,
They did his measures thraw, man, thwart
For North an' Fox united stocks,
An' bore him to the wa', man.

Then clubs an' hearts were Charlie's cartes, cards
He swept the stakes awa', man,
Till the diamond's ace, of Indian race,
Led him a sair *faux pas*, man;
The Saxon lads, wi' loud placads, cheers
On Chatham's boy did ca', man;
An' Scotland drew her pipe an' blew,
"Up, Willie, waur them a', man!" worst

Behind the throne then Grenville's gone,
A secret word or twa', man;
While slee Dundas arous'd the class sly
Be-north the Roman wa', man: north of
An' Chatham's wraith, in heavenly graith, ghost garb
(Inspirèd bardies saw, man)
Wi' kindling eyes cried, "Willie, rise!
Would I ha'e fear'd them a', man?"

But, word an' blow, North, Fox, and Co.,
Gowff'd Willie like a ba', man, knocked about
Till Southrons raise, and coost their claise cast off clothes
Behind him in a raw, man; row
An' Caledon threw by the drone,
An' did her whittle draw, man; knife
An' swoor fu' rude, thro' dirt an' blood swore
To make it guid in law, man.

* * * * * * *

[1] Buckskins, a term applied to the American troops during the Revolutionary war.

[2] Unloosed his tinker tongue, *i.e.* indulged in the coarse raillery characteristic of a tinker.

SONG—THE RANTING DOG THE DADDIE O'T.

TUNE—"*East nook o' Fife.*"

We have the poet's own authority for asserting that these verses were sent to a "young girl, a particular acquaintance of his, at that time under a cloud." This is supposed to be the affair alluded to in his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore (1787) as occurring shortly after he put his hand to the plough, on his return from Irvine. If so the song was probably written some little time before the next following piece, the "young girl" being the mother of his own child.

O wha my babie clouts will buy?
O wha will tent me when I cry? attend to
Wha will kiss me where I lie?
The rantin' dog the daddie o't. frolicsome

O wha will own he did the fau't?
O wha will buy my groanin'-maut? lying-in ale
O wha will tell me how to ca't? call it
The rantin' dog the daddie o't.

When I mount the creepie-chair, stool of repentance in church
Wha will sit beside me there?
Gie me Rob, I'll seek nae mair,— no more
The rantin' dog the daddie o't.

Wha will crack to me my lane? chat when alone
Wha can mak' me fidgin' fain? keenly fond
Wha will kiss me o'er again?
The rantin' dog the daddie o't.

THE POET'S WELCOME TO HIS ILLEGITIMATE CHILD.[1]

"The first instance that entitled him to the venerable appellation of father."—R. B.

Thou's welcome, wean! mishanter fa' me, child misadventure befall
If ought of thee, or of thy mammy,
Shall ever danton me, or awe me, daunt
My sweet wee lady,
Or if I blush when thou shalt ca' me call
Tit-ta or daddy.

Wee image of my bonny Betty,
I fatherly will kiss and daut thee, fondle
As dear and near my heart I set thee
Wi' as guid will,
As a' the priests had seen me get thee,
That's out o' h-ll.

What tho' they ca' me fornicator,
And tease my name in kintra clatter: country gossip

[1] Elizabeth (daughter of Elizabeth Paton), the "sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess" of "The Inventory," who grew up in Gilbert Burns's household, married, had a family, and died in 1816.

The mair they talk I'm kent the better, — more known
E'en let them clash; — tattle
An auld wife's tongue's a feckless matter — trifling
To gie ane fash. — give one trouble

Sweet fruit o' mony a merry dint,
My funny toil is no a' tint, — lost
Sin' thou cam' to the warl' asklent — aslant
Which fools may scoff at;
In my last plack thy part's be in't, — farthing
The better half o't.

Tho' I should be the waur bestead, — worse
Thou's be as braw and bienly clad, — fine warmly
And thy young years as nicely bred
Wi' education,
As ony brat o' wedlock's bed
In a' thy station.

And if thou be what I would hae thee, — would have
And tak' the counsel I shall gie thee, — give
A lovin' father I'll be to thee,
If thou be spared:
Thro' a' thy childish years I'll ee thee, — eye
And think't weel war'd. — spent

Gude grant that thou may aye inherit
Thy mither's person, grace, and merit,
And thy poor worthless daddy's spirit,
Without his failins,
'Twill please me mair to see thee heir it,
Than stockit mailins. — farms

EPISTLE TO JOHN RANKINE[1]

ENCLOSING SOME POEMS.

O rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine,
The wale o' cocks for fun and drinkin'! — choice
There's mony godly folks are thinkin'
Your dreams[2] an' tricks
Will send you, Korah-like, a-sinkin',
Straught to auld Nick's. — straight

[1] Burns's friend, John Rankine, farmer at Adamhill, near Lochlea, was an inveterate wag. He entertained a "saunt" to a jorum of toddy, and as the hot-water kettle contained boiled whisky, the more the good man took the more hopelessly drunk he got.

[2] A certain humorous dream of his was then making a noise in the country-side.—R. B. Rankine was famous for inventing amusing dreams in which, by way of joke, his acquaintances figured or were in some way concerned.

Ye hae sae monie cracks and cants, tales and tricks
And in your wicked drucken rants, drunken frolics
Ye mak' a devil o' the saunts, saints
An' fill them fou; tipsy
And then their failings, flaws, an' wants,
Are a' seen thro'.

Hypocrisy, in mercy spare it!
That holy robe, O dinna tear it! do not
Spare't for their sakes wha aften wear it,
The lads in black!
But your curst wit, when it comes near it,
Rives't aff their back. tears it

Think, wicked sinner, wha ye're skaithing, harming
It's just the Blue-gown badge and claithing[1] clothing
O' saunts; tak' that, ye lea'e them naething
To ken them by, know
Frae ony unregenerate heathen from
Like you or I.[2]

I've sent you here some rhyming ware,
A' that I bargain'd for an' mair; more
Sae, when ye hae an hour to spare,
I will expect
Yon sang,[3] ye'll sen't wi' cannie care, thoughtful
And no neglect.

Tho' faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My muse dow scarcely spread her wing! can
I've play'd mysel' a bonnie spring, tune
An' danc'd my fill!
I'd better gane an' sair'd the king, gone and served
At Bunker's Hill.

[1] The blue-gown belonged to a privileged order of Scottish mendicants now extinct. They derived their name from the colour of the habit which they wore, and with which they were wont to be supplied at the expense of royalty, in conformity, it is said, with an ordinance of the Catholic Church. On the annual return of the royal birth-day each bedesman received in addition to the cloak or gown of light blue coarse cloth, a badge and a leathern purse, containing as many shillings Scots (pennies sterling) as the sovereign was years old. The badge conferred on them the general privilege of wandering over Scotland, in pursuit of their calling, in despite of all laws against mendicity. Every reader will at once recall to mind, as a favourable specimen of the class, the Edie Ochiltree of Scott. In his introduction to the *Antiquary* Sir Walter gives an interesting account of the blue-gowns as a whole, with anecdotes of one or two distinguished members of the tribe. Burns seems to have looked forward, with a gloomy and almost misanthropic feeling, to closing his own career in the character of a beggar. Thus in his "Epistle to Davie," after a reflection on the inequality with which the gifts of fortune are shared, and a boast of their power to earn by labour their daily bread, he remarks:—

> The last o't, the warst o't,
> Is only but to beg.

At a later period of his life Burns had not got altogether quit of such darkening anticipations. In his "Dedication to Gavin Hamilton," after boasting of the independence which his ability to plough conferred, and his consequent want of necessity for cringing to the great for the means of subsistence, he says,

> And when I downa yoke a naig,
> Then, Lord be thankit, I can beg!

[2] This gross solecism in grammar (Scotch or English), though necessary to the rhyme, grates sadly on the ear.

[3] A song he had promised the author.—R. B.

'Twas ae night lately in my fun, — one
I gaed a roving wi' the gun, — went
An' brought a paitrick to the grun', — partridge ground
A bonnie hen,
And, as the twilight was begun,
Thought nane wad ken.

The poor wee thing was little hurt;
I straikit it a wee for sport, — stroked
Ne'er thinkin' they wad fash me for't; — trouble
But, deil-ma-care!
Somebody tells the poacher-court
The hale affair. — whole

Some auld us'd hands had ta'en a note,
That sic a hen had got a shot; — such
I was suspected for the plot;
I scorn'd to lie;
So gat the whissle o' my groat, — took the consequences
An' pay't the fee.

But, by my gun, o' guns the wale, — choice
An' by my pouther an' my hail, — powder
An' by my hen, an' by her tail,
I vow an' swear!
The game shall pay o'er moor an' dale,
For this, niest year. — next

As soon's the clockin-time is by, — brooding-time
An' the wee pouts begun to cry, — poults
L—d, I'se hae sportin' by an' by,
For my gowd guinea: — gold
Tho' I should herd the Buckskin kye[1] — kine
For't in Virginia.

Trowth, they had muckle for to blame! — in truth
'Twas neither broken wing nor limb,
But twa-three draps about the wame — belly
Scarce thro' the feathers;
An' baith a yellow George to claim, — both guinea
An' thole their blethers! — suffer their idle talk

It pits me aye as mad's a hare; — puts
So I can rhyme nor write nae mair;
But pennyworths again is fair, — tit for tat
When time's expedient:
Meanwhile I am, respected Sir,
Your most obedient.

[1] In the war of the American independence the native American troops were known by the name of "Buckskins." By "Buckskin kye" Burns perhaps means the slaves—contemplating the possibility of his having to betake himself to America for his misdeeds at home; or it might mean that he had thoughts of turning soldier—"sairing the king," to use his own words above. The American war was over by this time.

SONG—O LEAVE NOVELS.

TUNE—"*Mauchline Belles.*"

The first and third stanzas of this song seem to have been improvised during one of his light-hearted moods, about the date of the occupation of Mossgiel farm, March, 1784. The second and fourth stanzas were added for the sixth volume of Johnson's *Museum*.—Mauchline is a small town about a mile from the farm.

O leave novéls, ye Mauchline belles,
Ye're safer at your spinning-wheel;
Such witching books are baited hooks,
For rakish rooks like Rob Mossgiel.

Your fine Tom Jones and Grandisons,
They make your youthful fancies reel;
They heat your brains, and fire your veins,
And then you're prey for Rob Mossgiel.

Beware a tongue that's smoothly hung,
A heart that warmly seems to feel;
That feeling heart but acts a part,—
'Tis rakish art in Rob Mossgiel.

The frank address, the soft caress,
Are worse than poisoned darts of steel,
The frank address, and politesse,
Are all finesse in Rob Mossgiel.

SONG—THE BELLES OF MAUCHLINE.[1]

TUNE—"*Bonnie Dundee.*"[2]

In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,
The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a';
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
In Lon'on or Paris they'd gotten it a':

[1] The matrimonial fates of the "six proper young belles" of Mauchline, were as follows:—Miss (Helen) Miller was married to Dr. Mackenzie of Mauchline, a friend of Burns's. Miss Markland was married to a Mr. Finlay, an officer of excise first at Tarbolton (where he was appointed to teach Burns the mysteries of gauging and excise book-keeping) and afterwards at Greenock. Miss Smith was married to Mr. James Candlish, an early friend of the poet's, and to whom he addresses a letter in March 1787, bearing the style "Student in Physic, Glasgow College," and opening, "My ever dear, old acquaintance." Mr. Candlish, after his union with the witty Miss Smith, received an appointment as a teacher in connection with Edinburgh University, and died in 1806, leaving behind him six of a family, the youngest of whom was Dr. Candlish, one of the founders and great leaders of the Free Church of Scotland. Miss Betty (Miller), sister of the first-mentioned belle, was married to a Mr. Templeton, and died early in life. Miss Morton bestowed her beauty (of which she is said to have had a considerable share) and her fortune (amounting to five or six hundred pounds entirely under her own control) on a Mr. Paterson, a farmer in Ochiltree parish. Jean Armour "the jewel" became the wife of the poet. Mr. Chambers notes that as late as 1850 three of the belles, Mrs. Paterson, Mrs. Finlay, and Mrs. Candlish survived.

[2] There are two popular Scotch airs known under this name: the bold stirring tune sung to Scott's song "To the Lords o' Convention 'twas Claverhouse spoke," and the more gently flowing melody sung to M'Neil's "Saw ye my wee thing?" It is to this latter air that Burns wrote the above song.

Miss Miller is fine, Miss Markland's divine,
Miss Smith she has wit, and Miss Betty is braw:
There's beauty and fortune to get with Miss Morton,
But Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'.

SONG—WHEN FIRST I CAME TO STEWART KYLE.

TUNE—"*I had a horse, I had nae mair.*"[1]

This fragment is entered in the Common-place Book under date August, 1784. The "Mauchline lady" is doubtless Jean Armour.

When first I came to Stewart Kyle,[2]
My mind it was na steady;
Where'er I gaed, where'er I rade, went rode
A mistress still I had aye:
But when I came roun' by Mauchline town,
Not dreadin' any body,
My heart was caught before I thought,
And by a Mauchline lady.

EPITAPH—ON A NOISY POLEMIC.

James Humphrey, a jobbing mason, a village oracle in matters of doctrine, was the subject of this rather weak effusion. He survived till 1844, having reached the age of 86. In his latter days he was the recipient of many an alms-gift, through stating with pride that he was Burns's "bleth'ring bitch."

Below thir stanes lie Jamie's banes: these stones
O Death, it's my opinion,
Thou ne'er took such a bleth'ring b-tch babbling
Into thy dark dominion!

EPITAPH—ON A HENPECKED COUNTRY SQUIRE.

As father Adam first was fool'd,
A case that's still too common—
Here lies a man a woman rul'd,
The devil rul'd the woman.

EPIGRAM—ON THE SAID OCCASION.

O death, hadst thou but spared his life
Whom we, this day, lament!
We freely wad exchang'd the wife, would (have)
And a' been weel content.

[1] This is the title of an old song of which Burns's words are in some measure a parody.

[2] Stewart Kyle is that part of Kyle lying between the rivers Irvine and Ayr (see p. 75).

Ev'n as he is, cauld in his graff, — grave
The swap we yet will do't: — exchange
Tak thou the carlin's carcase off, — scolding old woman
Thou'se get the saul o' boot. — to boot

ANOTHER.

This and the two immediately preceding epigrams were aimed at Campbell of Netherplace, Mauchline, and his wife. They were published in the first edition of Burns's poems, but were withdrawn from subsequent ones. They can pain no one now, and are here given as curiosities, though their merit is not great.

One Queen Artemisia, as old stories tell,
When deprived of her husband she lovèd so well,
In respect for the love and affection he'd show'd her
She reduc'd him to dust, and she drank off the powder.

But Queen Netherplace, of a different complexion,
When call'd on to order the fun'ral direction,
Would have eat her dead lord, on a slender pretence,
Not to show her respect, but—to save the expense.

ON TAM THE CHAPMAN.[1]

As Tam the Chapman on a day
Wi' Death forgather'd by the way, — met
Weel pleas'd, he greets a wight sae famous,
And Death was nae less pleas'd wi' Thomas,
Wha cheerfully lays down the pack,
And there blaws up a hearty crack: — conversation
His social, friendly, honest heart
Sae tickled Death, they couldna part:
Sae, after viewing knives and garters,
Death takes him hame to gie him quarters.

EPIGRAMMATIC LINES TO J. RANKINE.

Ae day, as Death, that gruesome carl, — one
Was driving to the tither warl' — other world
A mixtie-maxtie motley squad, — miscellaneous
And mony a guilt-bespotted lad;
Black gowns of each denomination,
And thieves of every rank and station,

[1] These verses, singularly enough, were first given to the world by William Cobbett in his *Magazine*. Cobbett became acquainted with the subject of them when the latter was in his old days and resident in London. He was named Thomas Kennedy, an early friend of the poet's, and, at the time the epitaph was written, a traveller for a mercantile house, hence the appellation of "chapman."

From him that wears the star and garter,
To him that wintles in a halter: wriggles
Asham'd himself to see the wretches,
He mutters, glow'rin' at the bitches, staring
"By G-d, I'll not be seen behint them,
Nor 'mang the sp'ritual core present them, corps
Without at least ae honest man, one
To grace this d——d infernal clan."
By Adamhill a glance he threw,
"L—d G-d!" quoth he, "I have it now,
There's just the man I want, i' faith,"
And quickly stoppit *Rankine's* breath.

LINES TO JOHN RANKINE.[1]

WRITTEN WITH THE SUPPOSED VIEW OF BEING FORWARDED AFTER THE POET'S DEATH.

He who of Rankine sang, lies stiff and dead,
And a green grassy hillock hides his head;
Alas! alas! an awful change indeed.

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.[2]

A DIRGE.

There is an old poem, called "The Life and Age of Man" of which Burns, in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, says, "I had an old grand-uncle with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years: the good old man, for such he was, was long blind before he died, during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of the 'Life and Age of Man.'" This poem was evidently running in Burns's recollection when he wrote "Man was made to Mourn." It opens thus:—

Upon the sixteen hunder year
Of God and fifty-three,
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testifie;
On January the sixteenth day,
As I did lie alone,
With many a sigh and sob did say,
Ah! Man is made to Moan.

When chill November's surly blast
Made fields and forests bare,
One ev'ning, as I wander'd forth
Along the banks of Ayr,
I spied a man, whose aged step
Seem'd weary, worn with care;
His face was furrow'd o'er with years,
And hoary was his hair.

[1] In reference to the subject of these and the preceding lines see "Epistle to John Rankine," p. 38.

[2] The above dirge is entered into the poet's first Common-place Book (April 1783—Oct. 1785) under date of August, 1785. It is there called a "Song (*Tune*—Peggy Bawn)." It is almost needless to say that the poem is now never (if it ever was) sung to this or to any other tune.

"Young stranger, whither wand'rest thou?"
Began the reverend sage;
"Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,
Or youthful pleasure's rage?
Or haply, press'd with cares and woes,
Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me, to mourn
The miseries of man.

"The sun that overhangs yon moors,[1]
Out-spreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labour to support
A haughty lordling's pride:[2]
I've seen yon weary winter sun
Twice forty times return;
And ev'ry time has added proofs,
That man was made to mourn.

"O man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Misspending all thy precious hours,
Thy glorious youthful prime!
Alternate follies take the sway;
Licentious passions burn;
Which tenfold force gives nature's law,
That man was made to mourn.

"Look not alone on youthful prime,
Or manhood's active might;
Man then is useful to his kind,
Supported is his right:
But see him on the edge of life,
With cares and sorrows worn,
Then age and want—Oh! ill-match'd pair—
Show man was made to mourn.

"A few seem favourites of fate,
In pleasure's[3] lap caress'd;
Yet, think not all the rich and great
Are likewise truly blest.
But, oh! what crowds in ev'ry land,
All wretched and forlorn;[4]
Thro' weary life this lesson learn,
That man was made to mourn.

"Many and sharp the num'rous ills[5]
Inwoven with our frame!

1 In the poet's Common-place Book the following variations occur:—

1 "Yon sun that hangs o'er Carrick moors."
2 "The lordly Cassilis' pride."
3 "Fortune's."
4 "To wants and sorrows born."
5 "Many the ills that Nature's hand
Has woven," &c.

More pointed still we make ourselves
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heaven-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!

"See yonder poor o'erlaboured wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm[1]
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn.

"If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave,—
By nature's law[2] designed,—
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty and scorn?
Or why has man the will and power
To make his fellow mourn?

"Yet, let not this too much, my son,
Disturb thy youthful breast:
This partial view of human-kind
Is surely not the last!
The poor, oppressèd, honest man,
Had never, sure, been born,
Had there not been some recompense
To comfort those that mourn!

"O death! the poor man's dearest friend,
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour my agèd limbs
Are laid with thee at rest!
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,
From pomp and pleasure torn;
But, oh! a blest relief to those
That weary-laden, mourn!"[3]

[1] "Several of the poems were produced for the purpose of bringing forward some favourite sentiment of the author. He used to remark to me, that he could not conceive a more mortifying picture of human life than a man seeking work. In casting about in his mind how the sentiment might be brought forward, the elegy, 'Man was made to Mourn,' was composed."—GILBERT BURNS.

[2] "Hand," for "law," is the reading given in the poet's Common-place Book.

[3] "In 'Man was made to Mourn,' whatever might be the casual idea that set the poet to work, it is but too evident that he wrote from the habitual feelings of his own bosom. The indignation with which he through life contemplated the inequality of human condition, and particularly—and who shall say with absolute injustice?—the contrast between his own worldly circumstances and intellectual rank, was never more bitterly nor more loftily expressed than in some of these stanzas."—J. G. LOCKHART.

THE TWA HERDS, OR THE HOLY TUILZIE.[1]

"The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my 'Holy Fair.' I had a notion myself that the piece had some merit; but to prevent the worst I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity it met with a roar of applause."—BURNS'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LETTER TO DR. MOORE.—The title, it may be as well to remark, means "The two *shepherds*, or the holy brawl."

> Blockheads, with reason, wicked wits abhor,
> But fool with fool is barbarous civil war.—POPE.

O a' ye pious godly flocks,
Weel fed on pastures orthodox,
Wha now will keep you frae the fox, — from
Or worrying tykes, — dogs
Or wha will tent the waifs and crocks, — tend — old ewes
About the dykes? — built fences

The twa best herds in a' the wast, — shepherds
That e'er gae gospel horn a blast — gave
These five and twenty simmers past,
O! dool to tell, — sorrow
Hae had a bitter black out-cast — quarrel
Atween themsel'.

O Moodie, man, and wordy Russell, — worthy
How could you raise so vile a bustle,
Ye'll see how New-Light herds will whistle,
And think it fine!
The Lord's cause ne'er gat sic a twistle, — got such a twist
Sin' I hae min'. — have recollection

[1] At the time at which the "Twa Herds" was composed—probably about the end of 1784—to use the words of Burns, "polemical divinity was putting the country half mad." The parties in the controversy then carried on regarding the comparative efficacy of faith and works, were designated by the names of Old and New Light. Burns, partly from education, and from his connection with Gavin Hamilton, who took a prominent part in the controversy, and who, from certain singularities in walk and conversation, had drawn upon himself the anathema of his parish minister Mr. Auld, one of the leaders of the Old Light party, and partly, it may be supposed, from still smarting under the "rebuke" of the same reverend divine, attached himself with all the recklessness of a partisan to the party of New Light controversialists. A personal quarrel between Mr. Moodie, minister of Riccarton, and Mr. Russell, minister of the High Church, Kilmarnock, both enjoying the benefit of the Old Light, afforded too favourable an opportunity for the exercise of his talent for satire—in which he had already discovered the secret of his power—to be allowed to escape. The biographers of Burns, however, differ in their statements of the ground of controversy which resulted in the quarrel celebrated in the "Twa Herds." Lockhart represents it as proceeding from a misunderstanding concerning parish boundaries; and as taking place in the presbytery in open court, to which the announcement of the discussion had drawn a multitude of the country people, and Burns among the rest. Allan Cunningham, on the other hand, represents the quarrel as having taken place, in consequence of a controversy on "effectual calling," in which the parties engaged on their way home from the Monday sermon following a sacrament; and details the particulars of the quarrel. The matter is of no great consequence. The ninth stanza of the poem seems to incline the weight of evidence in favour of the first account. Had the parties been really guilty of coming to blows, as was even hinted, all mention of such a circumstance would scarce have been omitted from the poem—presenting, as it would have done, so much broader a mark for the shafts of the poet's satire.

It may be added to all this, that the law of church patronage also formed a fruitful subject of discussion and dissension among the Old and New Light controversialists.

O, sirs! whae'er wad hae expeckit — would have
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit, — would (have) so
Ye wha were ne'er by lairds respeckit, — proprietors
To wear the plaid,
But by the brutes themselves eleckit,
To be their guide.

What flock wi' Moodie's flock could rank,
Sae hale and hearty every shank!
Nae poison'd sour Arminian stank, — ditch
He let them taste,
Frae Calvin's well, aye clear, they drank,—
O sic a feast! — such

The thummart, wil'-cat, brock and tod, — pole-cat wild-cat badger fox
Weel kenn'd his voice thro' a' the wood,
He smelt their ilka hole and road, — every
Baith out and in, — both
And weel he lik'd to shed their bluid,
And sell their skin.

What herd like Russell tell'd his tale?
His voice was heard thro' muir and dale,
He kenn'd the Lord's sheep, ilka tail, — every
O'er a' the height,
And saw gin they were sick or hale, — if
At the first sight.

He fine a mangy sheep could scrub,
Or nobly fling the gospel club,
And New-Light herds could nicely drub,
Or pay their skin, — dress
Could shake them o'er the burning dub; — pool
Or heave them in.

Sic twa—O! do I live to see't— — such two
Sic famous twa should disagreet,
An' names, like "villain, hypocrite,"
Ilk ither gi'en,
While New-Light herds wi' laughin' spite,
Say neither's liein'!

A' ye wha tent the gospel fauld, — tend fold
There's Duncan,[1] deep, and Peebles,[2] shaul, — shallow
But chiefly thou, apostle Auld,[3]
We trust in thee,
That thou wilt work them, het and cauld, — hot
Till they agree.

[1] Dr. Robert Duncan, minister of Dundonald.
[2] Rev. William Peebles, of Newton-upon-Ayr. He was given to verse-making, and figures both in the "Holy Fair" and the "Kirk's Alarm," as do other reverend gentlemen here named. See notes there.
[3] Rev. William Auld, minister of Mauchline.

Consider, sirs, how we're beset,
There's scarce a new herd that we get,
But comes frae 'mang that cursed set, from among
I winna name: will not
I hope frae heav'n to see them yet
In fiery flame.

Dalrymple[1] has been lang our fae, foe
M'Gill[2] has wrought us meikle wae,
And that curs'd rascal ca'd M'Quhae,[3] called
And baith the Shaws,[4]
That aft hae made us black and blae, blue
Wi' vengefu' paws.

Auld Wodrow[5] lang has hatch'd mischief,
We thought aye death wad bring relief,
But he has gotten, to our grief,
Ane to succeed him,
A chiel wha'll soundly buff our beef; fellow thrash us
I meikle dread him.

And mony a ane that I could tell,
Wha fain would openly rebel,
Forby turn-coats amang oursel', besides
There's Smith[6] for ane,
I doubt he's but a grey-nick quill,[7]
And that ye'll fin'.

O! a' ye flocks, o'er a' the hills,
By mosses, meadows, moors, and fells,
Come join your counsel and your skills,
To cowe the lairds, terrify
And get the brutes the power themselves,
To choose their herds.

Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,
And Learning in a woody dance, halter
And that fell cur ca'd Common Sense,[8]
That bites sae sair, so sore
Be banish'd o'er the sea to France:
Let him bark there.

Then Shaw's and Dalrymple's eloquence,
M'Gill's close nervous excellence,

[1] Rev. Dr. Dalrymple, one of the ministers of Ayr, by whom the poet was baptized.
[2] Rev. William M'Gill, colleague of Dr. Dalrymple.
[3] Minister of St. Quivox.
[4] Dr. Andrew Shaw of Craigie, and Dr. David Shaw of Coylton.
[5] Dr. Peter Wodrow of Tarbolton. The successor alluded to in this verse was M'Math of the last verse.
[6] Rev. Mr. Smith of Galston, one of the tent-preachers in the "Holy Fair:" mentioned also in the "Kirk's Alarm."
[7] A bad quill, the nick or split being *grey* and uneven.
[8] A pamphlet with this signature, written by one of the New Light party, had recently appeared, and attracted some notice.

M'Quhae's pathetic manly sense,
And guid M'Math,
Wi' Smith, wha thro' the heart can glance,
May a' pack aff.

HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER.[1]

The following argument in the poet's own handwriting is prefixed in the Glenriddell MS., now in the Athenæum Library, Liverpool:—"Holy Willie was a rather oldish bachelor elder, in the parish of Mauchline, and much and justly famed for that polemical chattering, which ends in tippling orthodoxy, and for that spiritualized bawdry which refines to liquorish devotion. In a sessional process with a gentleman in Mauchline—a Mr. Gavin Hamilton—*Holy Willie* and his priest, Father Auld, after full hearing in the Presbytery of Ayr, came off but second best; owing partly to the oratorical powers of Mr. Robert Aiken, Mr. Hamilton's counsel; but chiefly to Mr. Hamilton's being one of the most irreproachable and truly respectable characters in the county. On losing his process, the muse overheard him at his devotions as follows":—

O Thou, wha in the heavens does dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best Thysel',
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
A' for Thy glory,
And no for ony guid or ill
They've done afore Thee!

I bless and praise Thy matchless might,
Whan thousands Thou hast left in night,
That I am here afore Thy sight,
For gifts and grace,
A burnin' and a shinin' light,
To a' this place.

What was I, or my generation,
That I should get sic exaltation? such
I wha deserve sic just damnation,
For broken laws,
Five thousand years 'fore my creation,
Thro' Adam's cause.

When frae my mither's womb I fell, from
Thou might hae plungèd me in hell,
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,
In burnin' lakes,

[1] "Holy Willie's Prayer," which Sir Walter Scott characterizes as "a piece of satire, more exquisitely severe than any which Burns afterwards wrote," was composed to aid Gavin Hamilton, the poet's friend and landlord, in his controversy with the Old Light functionaries of "Daddie Auld's" session. See on this subject note to the poetical Epistle to Gavin Hamilton, May 3, 1786. The hero of this poem, by name William Fisher, was a leading member of the Mauchline session (which at that time, indeed, consisted of but three active members—the Rev. William Auld, John Sillars, who afterwards committed suicide, and himself), and, in spite of his sanctimonious pretensions, was rather more inquisitive in the examination of female transgressors than seemed altogether decorous to his brethren. He scrupled not, moreover, to "get fou" when the liquor did not flow at his own cost; and to crown all, it was alleged, that he made free with the money of the poor. "His end," says Allan Cunningham, "was anything but godly; he drank more than was proper; and during one of his visits to Mauchline, was found dead in a ditch on his way to his own house." For "pilfering the alms of the poor" Burns gibbets him in the "Kirk's Alarm."

Whare damnèd devils roar and yell,
Chain'd to their stakes.

Yet I am here, a chosen sample,
To show Thy grace is great and ample;
I'm here a pillar in Thy temple,
Strong as a rock,
A guide, a buckler, an' example
To a' Thy flock.

O L—d, thou kens what zeal I bear,
When drinkers drink, and swearers swear,
And singin' there and dancin' here,
Wi' great an' sma';
For I am keepit by Thy fear,
Free frae them a'.

But yet, O L—d! confess I must,
At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust, troubled
And sometimes too, wi' warldly trust,
Vile self gets in;
But Thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd in sin.

O L—d, yestreen, Thou kens, wi' Meg—
Thy pardon I sincerely beg—
O, may't ne'er be a living plague
To my dishonour!
An' I'll ne'er lift a lawless leg
Again upon her.

Besides, I farther maun avow,
Wi' Leezie's lass three times, I trow—
But, L—d, that Friday I was fou,
When I came near her;
Or else, Thou kens, Thy servant true
Wad never steer her.

Maybe Thou lets this fleshly thorn
Beset Thy servant e'en and morn,
Lest he owre high and proud should turn,
That he's sae gifted;
If sae, Thy han' maun e'en be borne, must
Until thou lift it.

L—d, bless thy chosen in this place,
For here thou hast a chosen race;
But G–d confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,
Wha bring Thy elders to disgrace,
And public shame.

L—d, mind Gawn Hamilton's deserts,
He drinks and swears, and plays at cartes, cards
Yet has sae monie takin' arts,
Wi' grit and sma', great
Frae G–d's ain priests the people's hearts
He steals awa'.

And whan we chasten'd him therefor,
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore, knowest riot
As set the warld in a roar
O' laughin' at us;
Curse thou his basket and his store,
Kail and potatoes.

L—d, hear my earnest cry and prayer
Against that Presbyt'ry of Ayr;
Thy strong right hand, L—d, mak it bare,
Upo' their heads,
L—d, weigh it down, and dinna spare, do not
For their misdeeds.

O L—d my G–d, that glib-tongu'd Aiken,
My very heart and saul are quakin',
To think how we stood groanin', shakin',
And p—d wi' dread,
While he wi' hingin' lip and snakin', hanging sneering
Held up his head.

L—d, in the day of vengeance try him,
L—d, visit them wha did employ him,
And pass not in Thy mercy by 'em,
Nor hear their prayer;
But for Thy people's sake destroy 'em,
An' dinna spare.

But, L—d, remember me and mine
Wi' mercies temp'ral and divine,
That I for gear and grace may shine, wealth
Excell'd by nane,
And a' the glory shall be Thine.
Amen, Amen!

EPITAPH ON HOLY WILLIE.[1]

Here Holy Willie's sair worn clay sorely
Taks up its last abode;

[1] We are inclined to think that some verses of this very mediocre composition are amissing. Its author did not copy it into the Glenriddell MS. along with the "Prayer," and no copy of it in his handwriting is known to exist. It is highly probable that his maturer taste condemned it.

His saul has ta'en some other way,
I fear the left-hand road.

Stop! there he is, as sure's a gun,
Poor silly body, see him;
Nae wonder he's as black's the grun,— ground
Observe wha's standing wi' him!

Your brunstane devilship, I see, brimstone
Has got him there before ye;
But haud your nine-tail cat a wee, hold little
Till ance ye've heard my story.

Your pity I will not implore,
For pity ye hae nane; none
Justice, alas! has gi'en him o'er,
And mercy's day is gane. gone

But hear me, sir, Deil as you are,
Look something to your credit;
A coof like him wad stain your name, fool
If it were kent ye did it. known

EPISTLE TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.[1]

While winds frae aff Ben Lomond blaw, from off
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,
And hing us owre the ingle, hang fireplace
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
In hamely westlin jingle. homely west country

[1] *Davie* was David Sillar, whose father at this time occupied a farm, called Spittleside, within a mile of Tarbolton. Sillar thus records the manner of his introduction to the poet. "Robert Burns," he says, "was some time in the parish of Tarbolton prior to my acquaintance with him. His social disposition easily procured him acquaintance; but a certain satirical seasoning with which he and all other poetical geniuses are in some degree influenced, while it set the rustic circle in a roar, was not unaccompanied with suspicious fear. I recollect hearing his neighbours observe he had a great deal to say for himself, and that they suspected his principles. He wore the only tied hair in the parish; and in the church, his plaid, which was of a particular colour (I think fillemot), he wrapped in a peculiar manner round his shoulders. These surmises and his exterior *made me solicitous of his acquaintance*. I was introduced by Gilbert, not only to his brother, but to the whole of that family, where in a short time I became a frequent, and I believe not unwelcome visitant. After the commencement of my acquaintance with the bard we frequently met upon Sundays at church, when, between sermons, instead of going with our friends or lasses to the inn, we often took a walk in the fields."

Before this time, Sillar had opened a small school at Commonside, near Tarbolton, but not succeeding, he commenced business as a grocer in Irvine, towards the close of 1783. In 1789, tempted probably by the extraordinary success of Burns, he published a volume of very mediocre poems at Kilmarnock, which proved unsuccessful, and Sillar became bankrupt. He afterwards opened a school in Irvine, and applied himself so assiduously to his profession that he eventually became one of the principal teachers of the place. His whole character, in short, at this period underwent a change; and from being careless and jovial in his habits, he became diligent and parsimonious. In the course of his long life, he thus realized considerable property, and held the office of magistrate in Irvine for two years. In 1811 a large legacy fell to him from a brother, and he abandoned the school. He died in May, 1830, in the seventieth year of his age.

While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
  Ben to the chimla lug, inwards chimney ear (corner)
I grudge a wee the great folk's gift, little
  That live sae bien an' snug: so comfortable
    I tent less, and want less heed
      Their roomy fireside:
    But hanker and canker,
      To see their curs'd pride.

It's hardly in a body's power,
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
  To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whiles in want, fellows sometimes
While coofs on countless thousands rant, fools
  And ken na how to wair't: know not spend it
But, Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head, trouble
  Tho' we hae little gear, means
We're fit to win our daily bread,
  As lang's we're hale and fier: sound
    "Mair speer na, nor fear na,"[1] more ask not
      Auld age ne'er mind a feg, fig
    The last o't, the warst o't,
      Is only but to beg.

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are craz'd and bluid is thin,
  Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then content could make us blest;
Ev'n then, sometimes we'd snatch a taste
  Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that's free frae a' from all
  Intended fraud or guile,
However fortune kick the ba',
  Has aye some cause to smile: always
    And mind still, you'll find still, remember
      A comfort this nae sma'; not small
    Nae mair then, we'll care then,
      Nae farther can we fa'. fall

What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,
  But either house or hal'? without holding
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
  Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
  And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
  To see the coming year:

[1] Ramsay.—R. B.

On braes when we please, then, slopes
We'll sit an' sowth a tune; whistle softly
Syne rhyme till't, we'll time till't, then to it
And sing't when we hae done.[1]

It's no in titles nor in rank,
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
To purchase peace and rest;
It's no in makin' muckle mair: much more
It's no in books; it's no in lear, learning
To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest;
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
Could make us happy lang;
The heart aye's the part aye always
That makes us right or wrang.

Think ye, that sic as you and I, such
Wha drudge and drive thro' wet and dry,
Wi' never-ceasing toil;
Think ye, are we less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent us in their way, notice
As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how aft in haughty mood,
God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,
They riot in excess!
Baith careless, and fearless both
Of either heav'n or hell!
Esteeming, and deeming
It a' an idle tale!

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;
Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
By pining at our state;
And, even should misfortunes come,
I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,
An's thankfu' for them yet. and am
They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel': know ourselves
They make us see the naked truth,
The real guid and ill.
Tho' losses, and crosses,
Be lessons right severe,

[1] The epistle "breathes a noble spirit of independence and of proud contentment dallying with the hardships of its lot, and in the power of manhood regarding the riches that are out of its reach without a particle of envy, and with a haughty scorn."—PROFESSOR WILSON.

There's wit there, ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts! heed
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes, would wrong cards
And flatt'ry I detest,)
This life has joys for you and I;
And joys that riches ne'er could buy;
And joys the very best.
There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
The lover an' the frien';
Ye hae your Meg,[1] your dearest part,
And I my darling Jean!
It warms me, it charms me,
To mention but her name:
It heats me, it beets me, kindles
And sets me a' on flame!

O, all ye powers who rule above!
O Thou, whose very self art love!
Thou know'st my words sincere!
The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
Or my more dear, immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear!
When heart-corroding care and grief
Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
And solace to my breast.
Thou Being, All-seeing,
O hear my fervent pray'r;
Still take her, and make her,
Thy most peculiar care!

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
The sympathetic glow;
Long since, this world's thorny ways
Had numbered out my weary days,
Had it not been for you!
Fate still has bless'd me with a friend,
In every care and ill;
And oft a more endearing band,
A tie more tender still.
It lightens, it brightens,
The tenebrific scene,
To meet with, and greet with
My Davie or my Jean.

[1] Robert Chambers tells us that "Meg," at this time Sillar's sweetheart, was "a lass named Margaret Orr, who had the charge of the children of Mrs Stewart of Stair."

O, how that name inspires my style!
The words come skelpin, rank and file, tripping
Amaist before I ken! almost
The ready measure rins as fine, runs
As Phœbus and the famous Nine
Were glowrin' owre my pen. staring
My spaviet Pegasus will limp, spavined
Till ance he's fairly het; once hot
And then he'll hilch, and stilt, and jimp, halt limp jump
An' rin an unco fit: run at a great pace
But lest then, the beast then,
Should rue this hasty ride,
I'll light now, and dight now wipe
His sweaty wizen'd hide.

DEATH AND DR. HORNBOOK.

A TRUE STORY.

"'Death and Dr. Hornbook,' though not published in the Kilmarnock edition, was produced early in the year 1785. [John Wilson] the schoolmaster of Tarbolton parish, to eke up the scanty subsistence allowed to that useful class of men, had set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books, and become most hobby-horsically attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little trade. He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own incapacity, he had advertised, that advice would be given in 'common disorders at the shop gratis.' Robert was at a mason-meeting in Tarbolton, when the dominie unfortunately made too ostentatious a display of his medical skill. As he parted in the evening from this mixture of pedantry and physic, at the place where he describes his meeting with Death, one of those floating ideas of apparition he mentions in his letter to Dr. Moore, crossed his mind: this set him to work for the rest of his way home. These circumstances he related, when he repeated the verses to me next afternoon as I was holding the plough, and he was letting the water off the field beside me."—GILBERT BURNS.

Some books are lies frae end to end, from
And some great lies were never penn'd,
Ev'n ministers, they hae been kenn'd, have been known
In holy rapture,
A rousing whid at times to vend,[1] lie
And nail't wi' scripture.

But this that I am gaun to tell, going
Which lately on a night befell,
Is just as true's the Deil's in h–ll
Or Dublin city:[2]
That e'er he nearer comes oursel'
'S a muckle pity. great

[1] 2nd edit., "Great lies and nonsense baith to vend."

[2] This reference to the presence of "the Deil" in Dublin city is generally left without any attempt at explanation. But in Alexander Smith's edition of Burns (the "Globe"), at page 584 occurs the following note, which may be taken for what it is worth:—"Mr. Robert Wright, in his *Life of Major-General James Wolfe*, states that 'Hell' was the name given to the arched passage in Dublin which led into the area on the south side of Christ Church, and east of the law courts. A representation of the devil, carved in oak, stood above the entrance."

The clachan yill had made me canty, village ale lively
I was na fou, but just had plenty; not tipsy
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent aye staggered sometimes heed
To free the ditches;
An' hillocks, stanes, an' bushes, kenn'd aye
Frae ghaists an' witches. from ghosts

The rising moon began to glower stare
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre: -over
To count her horns, wi' a' my power,
I set mysel';
But whether she had three or four,
I cou'd na tell.[1]

I was come round about the hill,
And toddlin' down on Willie's mill,[2]
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker: steady
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker. short race

I there wi' Something did forgather, meet
That put me in an eerie swither; dread
An awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouther, over one shoulder
Clear-dangling, hang;
A three-tae'd leister on the ither fish-spear
Lay, large an' lang.

Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame it had ava! deuce a belly at all
And then, its shanks,
They were as thin, as sharp an' sma'
As cheeks o' branks. wooden cheek-pieces of a bridle

"Guid e'en," quo' I; "Friend! hae ye been mawin', mowing
When ither folk are busy sawin'?"[3]
It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan',
But naething spak:

[1] "His brother can set me right, if I am mistaken, when I express a belief, that, at the time when he wrote his story of 'Death and Dr. Hornbook,' he had very rarely been intoxicated, or, perhaps, even much exhilarated by liquor. Yet how happily does he lead his reader into that track of sensations! and with what lively humour does he describe the disorder of his senses and the confusion of his understanding put to test, by a deliberate attempt to count the horns of the moon—

But whether she had three or four,
He cou'd na tell.

Behold, a sudden apparition disperses this disorder, and in a moment chills him into possession of himself! Coming upon no more important mission than the grisly phantom was charged with, what mode of introduction could have been more efficient and appropriate?"—WORDSWORTH.

[2] Tarbolton Mill, on the Faile, close to Tarbolton village, and on the road to Mossgiel; called "Willie's Mill," because then occupied by William Muir, a friend of the Burns family, and a neighbour while they resided at Lochlea.

[3] This rencounter happened in seed-time, 1785.—R. B.——"The humour of Burns was original and successful. He had a strong propensity to view under a ludicrous aspect subjects which he thought zeal or superstition had invested with unnecessary or questionable sanctity. When beating for game, he delighted to push to the very confines of propriety,

"Guid e'en," quo' I, 'Friend! hae ye been mawin?"

—DEATH AND DR. HORNBOOK.

"Guid een," quo' I; "Friend! hae ye been mawin'?

At length, says I, "Friend, whare ye gaun? where are you going
Will ye go back?"

It spak right howe,—"My name is Death, hollow
But be na fley'd."—Quoth I, "Guid faith, scared
Ye're maybe come to stap my breath; stop
But tent me, billie: heed brother
I red ye weel, tak care o' skaith, counsel harm
See, there's a gully!" large knife

"Gudeman," quo' he, "put up your whittle, knife
I'm no design'd to try its mettle;
But if I did, I wad be kittle;[1] would be dangerous
To be mislear'd, mischievous
I wad na mind it, no that spittle
Out-owre my beard.

"Weel, weel!" says I, "a bargain be't;
Come, gie's your hand, an' sae we're gree't; agreed
We'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat.
Come, gie's your news!
This while ye hae been mony a gate for some time back road
At mony a house."[2]

"Ay, ay!" quo' he, an' shook his head,
"It's e'en a lang, lang time indeed
Sin' I began to nick the thread, cut
An' choke the breath:
Folk maun do something for their bread, must
An' sae maun Death.

"Sax thousand years are nearhand fled nearly
Sin' I was to the butching bred, butchering
An' mony a scheme in vain's been laid,
To stap or scaur me; stop scare
Till ane Hornbook's[3] ta'en up the trade,
An', faith, he'll waur me. defeat

"Ye ken Jock Hornbook i' the clachan, know village
Deil mak' his king's-hood[4] in a spleuchan! stomach into a tobacco-pouch

and to sport on the debatable line between sacred and profane. He was indeed scarcely excelled by Lucian himself, in that species of humour which is produced by debasing objects of the most serious and solemn magnitude, to the level of easy and indifferent familiarity. In the verses on Dr. Hornbook, where the poet relates his interview and social chat with Death, whose bony figure is drawn with equal drollery and correctness, how is the scythe of that dreaded being stript of its terror, when it only serves to suggest this homely and neighbourly address!"—PROFESSOR WALKER.

[1] We adopt Dr. Hately Waddell's punctuation here. The original editions read "kittle to be mislear'd," which is very difficult to explain, though it might perhaps mean "would be dangerous (were I) to be mischievous," or "would be apt to be mischievous."

[2] An epidemical fever was then raging in that country.—R. B.

[3] This gentlemen, Dr. Hornbook, is, professionally, a brother of the Sovereign Order of the Ferula; but, by intuition and inspiration, is at once an Apothecary, Surgeon, and Physician.—R. B.

[4] *King's-hood.* "The second of the four stomachs in ruminating animals; the *Reticulum*, honey-comb or bonnet, from its supposed resemblance to some puckered head-dress formerly worn by persons of rank."—JAMIESON.

He's grown sae weel acquaint wi' Buchan[1]
An' ither chaps,
The weans haud out their fingers laughin' children
And pouk my hips. pluck

"See, here's a scythe, and there's a dart,
They hae pierc'd mony a gallant heart;
But Doctor Hornbook, wi' his art,
And cursed skill,
Has made them baith no worth a ——,
Damn'd haet they'll kill. particle

"'Twas but yestreen, nae farther gaen, last night gone
I threw a noble throw at ane;
Wi' less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain;
But deil-ma-care!
It just play'd dirl on the bane, thud
But did nae mair. no more

"Hornbook was by, wi' ready art,
And had sae fortified the part,
That when I looked to my dart,
It was sae blunt
Fient haet o't wad hae pierc'd the heart deuce a bit
Of a kail-runt. colewort stem

"I drew my scythe in sic a fury,
I nearhand cowpit wi' my hurry, nearly tumbled over
But yet the bauld apothecary
Withstood the shock;
I might as weel hae tried a quarry
O' hard whin rock.

"Ev'n them he canna get attended,
Although their face he ne'er had kenn'd it,
Just —— in a kail-blade an' send it,
As soon's he smells't
Baith their disease and what will mend it
At once he tells't.

"And then a' doctors' saws and whittles, knives
Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles,
A' kinds o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles,
He's sure to hae;
Their Latin names as fast he rattles
As A B C.

"Calces o' fossils, earths, and trees;
True sal-marinum o' the seas;

[1] Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*.—R. B.

The farina of beans and pease,
He has't in plenty;
Aqua-fontis, what you please,
He can content ye.

"Forbye some new, uncommon weapons, besides
Urinus spiritus of capons;
Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,
Distill'd *per se;*
Sal-alkali o' midge-tail-clippings,
And mony mae." many more

"Wae's me for Johnny Ged's[1] Hole now,"
Quo' I, "if that thae news be true! those
His braw calf-ward[2] whare gowans grew, calf paddock daisies
Sae white and bonnie,
Nae doubt they'll rive it wi' the plew; plough
They'll ruin Johnny!"

The creature grain'd an eldritch laugh groaned elvish
And says, "Ye need na yoke the pleugh,
Kirkyards will soon be till'd eneugh,
Tak ye nae fear:
They'll a' be trench'd wi' mony a sheugh furrow
In twa-three year.

"Whare I kill'd ane a fair strae-death, death in bed
By loss o' blood or want o' breath,
This night I'm free to tak my aith, oath
That Hornbook's skill
Has clad a score i' their last claith, cloth
By drap and pill.

"An honest wabster to his trade, weaver
Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel bred, fists
Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,
When it was sair; sore
The wife slade cannie to her bed, slid quietly
But ne'er spak mair.

"A countra laird had ta'en the batts, land-owner botts
Or some curmurring in his guts, rumbling
His only son for Hornbook sets,
An' pays him well.
The lad, for twa guid gimmer pets, young ewes
Was laird himsel'.

[1] The grave-digger.—R. B. Ged's Hole was a croft or small holding where he lived.

[2] A small inclosure for calves; here applied to the churchyard, in which calves may have sometimes been pastured. It used to be by no means uncommon to see the minister's cattle feeding in country churchyards, which in most places were formerly treated with great neglect.

"A bonnie lass—ye kenn'd her name—
Some ill-brewn drink had hov'd her wame;
She trusts hersel' to hide the shame,
In Hornbook's care;
Horn sent her aff to her lang hame,
To hide it there.

"That's just a swatch o' Hornbook's way; sample
Thus goes he on from day to day,
Thus does he poison, kill, an' slay,
An's weel paid for't;
Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey,
Wi' his damn'd dirt.

"But, hark! I'll tell you of a plot,
Tho' dinna ye be speaking o't; do not
I'll nail the self-conceited sot,
As dead's a herrin':
Niest time we meet, I'll wad a groat, next bet
He gets his fairin'!" deserts

But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell struck
Some wee short hour ayont the twal, beyond twelve
Which rais'd us baith:
I took the way that pleas'd mysel',
And sae did Death.[1]

[1] This satire led to the removal of John Wilson, the prototype of Dr. Hornbook, to Glasgow, where he continued his old profession of schoolmaster, and about the year 1807 was elected session-clerk to the Gorbals, which office he held up to his death in 1839. When he obtained the session-clerkship, the Gorbals formed but a small suburb of Glasgow, but during his tenure of office the population increased enormously, and his emoluments from the registration of births and marriages increased in like proportion.

"In connection with his session-clerkship, Wilson kept a school in the Gorbals. The writer of this note had the—shall we say honour, or felicity, or both?—of being taught to write and cast accounts by the far-famed Dr. Hornbook. He was, as we remember him, a decent, dumpy elderly gentleman, dressed in black, with just enough of corpulency to give him 'a presence,' and a pair of stout little legs, inclined to the crooked, the attractions of which were fully developed through the medium of black tights and black silk stockings. He wore a brown wig, took snuff largely, and had a look of great complacency. He was a good teacher, and in general of easy temper, though subject to gusts of passion. He was extremely partial to the girls in the school, and often for days devoted almost exclusively his attention to them, much to the satisfaction of the boys. . . . Self-complacency—for it scarcely amounted to self-conceit—was his most prominent failing. Everything in his school was the best, and his way of doing everything was the best. This failing was aggravated by his parsimony, of which he got the name. His scholars must all buy their paper and pens from him:—there were no copy-books at all to be compared to *his* copy-books—no quills ever to be mentioned in the same breath with *his* pinions! If a scholar ventured to bring quills of his own from his father's counting-house, with what gusto did he split them up and hew them down, muttering all the while, 'Trash! Trash!'

"The self-complacency of the Gorbals session-clerk we can very well believe to have been just a modification, brought about by years, of the self-conceit of the Tarbolton dominie which provoked the satire of Burns. Wilson has been heard to say, 'I have often wondered what set Robert Burns upon me, for we were aye on the best of terms.' But with all its severity, the satire is levelled *only* at the presumption of Wilson in affecting a knowledge of medicine, and it is quite possible that the poet might laugh at that, and yet hold the dominie in considerable esteem."—ALEXANDER WHITELAW.

"The true story of 'Death and Dr. Hornbook' has only recently been made known on the reputed authority of Thomas Borland, a member of the Bachelor's Club, who was present on the occasion which gave it birth; it was a Mutual Improvement Society, founded by Burns—its first chairman and ruling spirit—meeting monthly for reading essays and debating thereon. The

EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK,[1]

AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD.

APRIL 1st, 1785.

"The 'Epistle to Lapraik' was produced exactly on the occasion described by the author. He says in that poem, 'On Fasten-e'en we had a rockin'.' I believe he has omitted the word *rocking* in the glossary. It is a term derived from those primitive times, when the countrywomen employed their spare hours in spinning on the rock or distaff. This simple implement is a very portable one, and well fitted to the social inclination of meeting in a neighbour's house; hence the phrase of *going a-rocking*, or *with the rock*. As the connection the phrase had with the implement was forgotten when the rock gave place to the spinning-wheel, the phrase came to be used by both sexes on social occasions, and men talked of going with their rocks as well as women. It was at one of these rockings at our house, when we had twelve or fifteen young people with their rocks, that Lapraik's song beginning 'When I upon thy bosom lean,' was sung, and we were informed who was the author. Upon this Robert wrote his first epistle to Lapraik, and his second in reply to Lapraik's answer."—GILBERT BURNS.

While briers an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks scraichin' loud at e'en, partridges screeching
An' morning poussie whiddin' seen, hare running quickly
Inspire my muse,
This freedom in an unknown frien',
I pray excuse.

young schoolmaster (John Wilson) was one of its members; it has been erroneously stated of him that he sold 'drugs,' which was not the case; most probably he contemplated preparing for the medical profession if circumstances proved favourable, at any rate his thoughts were turned in that direction. 'He's grown sae weel acquaint wi' Buchan, and ither chaps,' was quite true, and when his turn came to announce an essay he proposed 'Medicine,' a subject for discussion which caused much amusement, and so excited the poet's fancy on his way home, that the following morning saw the poem finished in the form we know so well. 'The clachan yill had made me canty,' was simply a poet's license, as it was a temperance meeting so far as drinking was concerned. There was no bad feeling or evil intention on the part of Burns towards Wilson, the popularity and annoyance that resulted were neither foreseen nor desired, but the poem conferred an unenviable notoriety upon its victim, and was carried beyond a joke when some neighbour in a wicked humour wrote, and posted on his door 'Advice Gratis,' a climax the schoolmaster little relished, but was helpless under its infliction."—From the preface to *The Burns Calendar*, a Manual of Burnsiana. Kilmarnock: James M'Kie, 1874.

[1] John Lapraik was born in 1727, at the farm of Laigh Dalfram, about three miles west of Muirkirk, in the east of Ayrshire. This property had been long in the possession of his family; and being the eldest son, he succeeded to it on the death of his father. In 1754 he married Margaret Rankine of Lochhead (sister to the "rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine"), whom, however, he had the misfortune to lose after giving birth to her fifth child. A few years afterwards, in 1766, he married the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, Janet Anderson of Lightshaw, the subject of the song which drew forth the first epistle of Burns. At the time of his second marriage, and for some years afterwards, he was still in Dalfram, but the bursting of that "villanous bubble," as Burns calls it, the Ayr Bank, involved him and many families of Ayrshire in ruin. He was obliged to let his own lands of Dalfram, and retire first to Muirsmill, a small farm in the vicinity, afterwards to Netherwood, a farm on the water of Greenock (a tributary of the Ayr), and again back to Muirsmill. Eventually he sold off his property, but the sale of his land failed to rid him of his liabilities; and the unfortunate man was thrown into prison. It is said that the song addressed to his wife, which excited so strongly the admiration of Burns, was composed while Lapraik was immured within the walls of Ayr jail. It furnishes a beautiful model of conjugal affection.

When I upon thy bosom lean,
And fondly clasp thee a' my ain,
I glory in the sacred ties,
That made us ane, wha ance were twain.
A mutual flame inspires us baith—
The tender look, the melting kiss;
Even years shall ne'er destroy our love,
But only gie us change o' bliss.

Hae I a wish? It's a' for thee:
I ken thy wish is me to please:
Our moments pass so smooth away,
That numbers on us look and gaze.
Weel pleas'd they see our happy days,
Nor envy's sel' finds aught to blame;
And aye when weary cares arise,
Thy bosom still shall be my hame.

I'll lay me there, and tak my rest;
And if that aught disturb my dear,
I'll bid her laugh her cares away,
And beg her not to drap a tear.
Hae I a joy? It's a' her ain:
United still her heart and mine;
They're like the woodbine round the tree
That's twined till death shall them disjoin.

On Fasten-e'en we had a rockin',[1] Shrove-Tuesday social gathering
To ca' the crack and weave our stockin'; chat together
And there was muckle fun an' jokin', much
Ye need na doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin' bout
At sang about. song by turns

There was ae sang, amang the rest, one song
Aboon them a' it pleased me best, above
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife:
It thirl'd the heart-strings thro' the breast, thrilled
A' to the life.

I've scarce heard ought describe sae weel, so well
What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel;
Thought I, "Can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie's wark!"
They tauld me 'twas an odd kind chiel fellow
About Muirkirk.

It pat me fidgin'-fain to hear't, put me fidgeting
And sae about him there I spier't, inquired
Then a' that kent him round declar'd knew
He had ingine, genius
That nane excell'd it, few cam near't,
It was sae fine.

That set him to a pint of ale,
An' either douce or merry tale, grave
Or rhymes an' sangs he'd made himsel',
Or witty catches,

Unfortunately, according to Robert Chambers, "Lapraik must have stolen the ideas and nearly all the diction of his song from a poem in Ruddiman's *Weekly Magazine*, October 1773." About 1798, Lapraik, then far advanced in years, removed to Muirkirk, and opened a small public-house, which served at the same time as the village post-office. Here he lived much respected till his death, which took place on the 7th May, 1807, in the eightieth year of his age.

Burns addressed in all *three* poetical epistles to Lapraik. Two were published in his first and second editions, and the third originally appeared in Cromek's *Reliques of Burns* (in 1808). The replies of Lapraik are all unfortunately lost, and if they were in rhyme, it is singular that none of them are given in his own volume, although that volume contains an epistle to the poet of a late date, consisting chiefly of an apology for his attempting to court the muse in his old age. One of Lapraik's sons, alive in 1841, recollected having been the bearer of several communications betwixt his father and Burns, who was then at Mossgiel. On the first occasion, he found the poet in a field sowing corn. "I'm no sure if I ken the han'," said Burns, as he took the letter; but no sooner had he glanced at its contents, than unconsciously letting go the sheet containing the grain, it was not till he had finished reading that he discovered the loss he had sustained. Burns and Lapraik met several times, to their mutual satisfaction. On one occasion, in the winter of 1785, according to a promise made in his third epistle, Burns visited Lapraik at Muirsmill, where he dined, spent a merry evening, and next morning took his departure for Mossgiel.

Lapraik's poems were published in 1788 at Kilmarnock, forming a thin 8vo volume entitled *Poems on Several Occasions*. In an address to Burns, he confesses that he never thought of troubling the world with his "dull, insipid, thowless rhyme,"

> Till your kind muse, wi' friendly blast,
> First tooted up my fame,
> And sounded loud thro' a' the wast,
> My lang forgotten name.

Lapraik's own estimate of his rhymes thus given is a tolerably just one. The address to his wife quoted above is much superior to the rest.

[1] This term is explained in introductory note to poem.

'Tween Inverness and Tiviotdale,
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, and swoor an aith, swore
Tho' I should pawn my pleugh and graith, harness
Or die a cadger pownie's death, hawker pony
At some dyke-back, behind some fence
A pint an' gill I'd gie them baith both
To hear your crack. chat

But, first an' foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell, almost
I to the crambo-jingle fell, rhyming
Tho' rude an' rough,
Yet, crooning to a body's sel', one's self
Does weel eneugh.

I am nae poet, in a sense,
But just a rhymer like by chance,
An' hae to learning nae pretence,
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, "How can you e'er propose,
You wha ken hardly verse frae prose, from
To mak a sang?"
But by your leave, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools;
If honest nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars? avail (serves)
Ye'd better ta'en up spades and shools, shovels
Or knappin' hammers. stone-breaking

A set o' dull, conceited hashes, boobies
Confuse their brains in college classes!
They gang in stirks, and come out asses, young bullocks
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus then
By dint o' Greek!

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire, one
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire puddle
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, tho' hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

O for a spunk o' Allan's[1] glee, spark
Or Fergusson's, the bauld and slee, sly
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be
If I can hit it!
That would be lear enough for me, learning
If I could get it.

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow, enough
Tho' real friends, I believe, are few,
Yet, if your catalogue be fu',
I'se no insist, I shall not
But gif ye want ae friend that's true,
I'm on your list.

I winna blaw about mysel'; will not boast
As ill I like my fauts to tell;
But friends, and folk that wish me well,
They sometimes roose me, praise
Tho' I maun own, as monie still must
As far abuse me.

There's ae wee faut they whyles lay to me, sometimes
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me!
For mony a plack[2] they wheedle frae me, farthing
At dance or fair;
Maybe some ither thing they gie me,
They weel can spare.

But Mauchline race,[3] or Mauchline fair,
I should be proud to meet you there;
We'se gie ae night's discharge to care, we shall give one
If we forgather, meet
An' hae a swap o' rhymin'-ware
Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter, pint-measure we shall make
An' kirsen him wi' reekin' water; christen
Syne we'll sit down an' tak our whitter, then a hearty drink
To cheer our heart:
An' faith we'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

Awa,—ye selfish warly race, worldly
Wha think that havins, sense, an' grace, good manners
Ev'n love an' friendship, should give place
To catch-the-plack! to turn the penny
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack. talk

[1] Allan Ramsay's.

[2] An old Scotch copper coin, in value one-third of a penny English.

[3] Mauchline races were celebrated on the high road near Mossgiel.

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose heart the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
"Each aid the others,"
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers.

But, to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen's worn to the gristle;
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle, would make me fidget
Who am, most fervent,
While I can either sing or whistle,
Your friend and servant.

SECOND EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK.

April 21st, 1785.

While new-ca'd kye rowte at the stake, newly-calved cows bellow
An' pownies reek in pleugh or braik, harrow
This hour on e'enin's edge I take,
To own I'm debtor
To honest-hearted, auld Lapraik,
For his kind letter.

Forjesket sair, wi' weary legs, sorely jaded
Rattlin' the corn out-owre the rigs, over the ridges
Or dealing thro' amang the naigs nags
Their ten-hours' bite, ten o'clock
My awkwart muse sair pleads and begs sorely
I would na write.

The tapetless ramfeezl'd hizzie, thoughtless overspent hussy
She's saft at best, and something lazy,
Quo' she, "Ye ken, we've been sae busy,
This month an' mair, more
That trouth, my head is grown right dizzie, in truth
An' something sair." sore

Her dowff excuses pat me mad; spiritless put
"Conscience," says I, "ye thowless jad! pithless
I'll write, an' that a hearty blaud, quantity
This vera night;
So dinna ye affront your trade,
But rhyme it right.

"Shall bauld Lapraik, the king o' hearts,
Tho' mankind were a pack o' cartes, cards

Roose you sae weel for your deserts, praise
In terms sae friendly,
Yet ye'll neglect to shaw your parts,
An' thank him kindly!"

Sae I gat paper in a blink, twinkling
An' down gaed stumpie in the ink; went the short quill
Quoth I, "Before I sleep a wink,
I vow I'll close it;
An' if ye winna mak it clink, rhyme
By Jove, I'll prose it!"

Sae I've begun to scrawl, but whether
In rhyme or prose, or baith thegither, both together
Or some hotch-potch that's rightly neither,
Let time mak proof;
But I shall scribble down some blether nonsense
Just clean aff-loof. off-hand

My worthy friend, ne'er grudge an' carp,
Tho' fortune use you hard an' sharp;
Come, kittle up your moorland harp tickle
Wi' gleesome touch!
Ne'er mind how fortune waft an' warp:
She's but a b-tch.

She's gi'en me monie a jirt an' fleg, jerk and kick
Sin' I could striddle owre a rig; stride over a ridge
But, by the L—d, tho' I should beg
Wi' lyart pow, grey head
I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow! can

Now comes the sax and twentieth simmer
I've seen the bud upo' the timmer, timber
Still persecuted by the limmer jade
Frae year to year; from
But yet, despite the kittle kimmer, fickle girl
I, Rob, am here.

Do ye envý the city gent,
Behint a kist to lie and sklent, counter act crookedly
Or purse-proud, big wi' cent. per cent.
And muckle wame, big belly
In some bit brugh to represent burgh
A bailie's name?

Or is't the paughty feudal Thane, haughty
Wi' ruffl'd sark an' glancin' cane, shirt
Wha thinks himsel' nae sheep-shank bane,[1] bone
But lordly stalks,

[1] Equivalent to our "no small beer;" *i.e.* is full of conceit.

While caps and bonnets aff are ta'en,
As by he walks?

O Thou wha gies us each guid gift!
Gie me o' wit an' sense a lift,
Then turn me, if Thou please, adrift,
Thro' Scotland wide;
Wi' cits nor lairds I wadna shift, land-owners would not
In a' their pride!

Were this the charter of our state,
"On pain o' hell be rich an' great,"
Damnation then would be our fate,
Beyond remead;
But, thanks to Heav'n! that's no the gate way
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began,
"The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
And none but he!"

O mandate glorious and divine!
The ragged followers of the Nine,
Poor, thoughtless devils! yet may shine
In glorious light,
While sordid sons of Mammon's line
Are dark as night.

Tho' here they scrape, an' squeeze, an' growl,
Their worthless nievefu' of a soul handful
May in some future carcase howl,
The forest's fright;
Or in some day-detesting owl
May shun the light.

Then may Lapraik and Burns arise,
To reach their native, kindred skies,
And sing their pleasures, hopes, an' joys
In some mild sphere,
Still closer knit in friendship's ties
Each passing year.

TO WILLIAM SIMSON,[1]

SCHOOLMASTER, OCHILTREE.

MAY, 1785.

I gat your letter, winsome Willie;
Wi' gratfu' heart I thank you brawlie; heartily
Tho' I maun say't, I wad be silly, must would
An' unco vain, very
Should I believe, my coaxin' billie, brother
Your flatterin' strain.

But I'se believe ye kindly meant it, I shall
I sud be laith to think ye hinted should be loath
Ironic satire, sidelin's sklented obliquely directed
On my poor musie;
Tho' in sic phrasin' terms ye've penn'd it, flattering
I scarce excuse ye.

My senses wad be in a creel,[2] basket
Should I but dare a hope to speel, climb
Wi' Allan,[3] or wi' Gilbertfield,[4]
The braes o' Fame; hillsides
Or Fergusson, the writer-chiel, lawyer-fellow
A deathless name.

(O Fergusson! thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry, musty arts!
My curse upon your whunstane hearts, whinstone
Ye E'nbrugh gentry!
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes, cards
Wad stow'd his pantry!) would have stored

Yet when a tale comes i' my head,
Or lasses gie my heart a screed, rent
As whyles they're like to be my dead, sometimes death
(O sad disease!)
I kittle up my rustic reed; tickle
It gies me ease.

[1] William Simson was the schoolmaster of the parish school of Ochiltree at the time his correspondence with the poet began. In the year 1788, he became teacher of the parish school of Cumnock, which office he retained with great credit till the period of his death in 1815. Simson had a turn for poetry, and besides several translations, left a MS. volume of original pieces which are said to have been superior to those of Lapraik and Sillar. The poetical letter which called forth the epistle of Burns is unfortunately lost. The acquaintance of Burns and William Simson was not confined to epistolary intercourse. They had many personal meetings, and were on terms of close friendship. In another note, we shall have occasion to speak of Simson, in connection with the "Answer to the Epistle from a Tailor."

[2] *To have one's wits in a creel*, is explained by Burns in his own glossary—to be crazed, to be fascinated.

[3] Allan Ramsay.

[4] William Hamilton of Gilbertfield (1665–1751), author of "Willie was a Wanton Wag" and other Scotch poems.

Auld Coila[1] now may fidge fu' fain, fidget full fain
She's gotten poets o' her ain, own
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain, fellows pipes will not spare
But tune their lays,
Till echoes a' resound again
Her weel-sung praise.

Nae poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measur'd style;
She lay like some unkenn'd-of isle
Beside New Holland,
Or whare wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth Magellan. south of

Ramsay an' famous Fergusson
Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon;[2] above
Yarrow an' Tweed to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings, over
While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon,
Naebody sings.

Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames, an' Seine,
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line!
But, Willie, set your fit to mine, foot
An' cock your crest,
We'll gar our streams and burnies shine make brooklets
Up wi' the best.

We'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks an' braes, her dens and dells, slopes
Where glorious Wallace
Aft bure the gree, as story tells, carried off the palm
Frae southron billies. fellows

At Wallace' name what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,

[1] Coila, Kyle, the central district of Ayrshire, with Cunningham on the north and Carrick on the south. In "The Vision" Coila is represented as the local muse or rustic nymph by whom the poet was specially inspired, and who had his poetic training and development in her charge.

[2] In Allan Ramsay's poems the Clyde seems to bulk more largely than any other Scottish river, giving name to the piece entitled *The Clyde's Welcome to his Prince.* Naturally other streams are mentioned also, as when, in *The Poet's Wish,* he speaks of—

> Those fair straths that water'd are
> With Tay and Tweed's smooth streams,
> Which gentily, and daintily
> Pare down the flow'ry braes,
> As greatly, and quietly,
> They wimple to the seas.

Robert Fergusson has sung the praises of Forth, Tweed, and Tay in various poems. In particular he has an ode entitled *The Rivers of Scotland* which is devoted to these three streams alone. In it we find Jove, Neptune, the Naiads, and other divinities of the classical pantheon brought before us, and like most pieces by him written after purely English models it has no special merit, the descriptive characterizations being of rather a hackneyed order.

Still pressing onward, red-wat-shod, with shoes wet and red with blood
Or glorious died.[1]

O, sweet are Coila's haughs an' woods, holms
When lintwhites chant amang the buds, linnets
And jinkin' hares, in amorous whids, dodging bounds
Their loves enjoy,
While thro' the braes the cushat croods coos
With wailfu' cry!

Ev'n winter bleak has charms for me,
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary gray:
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day!

O Nature! a' thy shows an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light,
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The Muse, nae poet ever fand her, found
Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trotting burn's meander,
An' no think lang;
O sweet! to stray, an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!

The warly race may drudge an' drive, worldly
Hog-shouther,[2] jundie, stretch, an' strive— jostle, push
Let me fair Nature's face descrive, describe
And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
Bum owre their treasure. hum over

Farewell, "my rhyme-composing brither!" [other
We've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither: too long unknown to each
Now let us lay our heads thegither, together
In love fraternal:
May Envy wallop in a tether, dangle in a rope
Black fiend, infernal!

[1] "The story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest."—BURNS'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIC LETTER TO DR. MOORE.

[2] *Hog-shouther*, that is "hog-shoulder," means to jostle or push with the shoulders like hogs (sheep) when a number of them are hurrying on together to the same spot.

While highlandmen hate tolls and taxes,
While moorlan' herds like guid fat braxies,[1]
While terra firma on her axis
Diurnal turns,
Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,
In Robert Burns.

POSTSCRIPT.

My memory's no worth a preen: — pin
I had amaist forgotten clean, — almost
Ye bade me write you what they mean
By this New-light,[2]
'Bout which our herds sae aft hae been — shepherds so often
Maist like to fight. — almost

In days when mankind were but callans — boys
At grammar, logic, an' sic talents, — such
They took nae pains their speech to balance,
Or rules to gie, — give
But spak their thoughts in plain, braid lallans, — broad Lowland speech
Like you or me.

In thae auld times, they thought the moon, — those
Just like a sark or pair o' shoon, — shirt shoes
Wore by degrees, till her last roon — shred
Gaed past their viewing, — went
An' shortly after she was done,
They gat a new ane. — got

This past for certain, undisputed;
It ne'er cam i' their heads to doubt it,
Till chiels gat up an' wad confute it, — fellows got would
An' ca'd it wrang;
An' muckle din there was about it,
Baith loud and lang. — both

Some herds, weel learn'd upo' the beuk, — book
Wad threap auld folk the thing misteuk: — would maintain mistook
For 'twas the auld moon turn'd a neuk, — corner
An' out o' sight,
An' backlins-coming, to the leuk, — backwards look
She grew more bright.

This was denied, it was affirm'd;
The herds an' hirsels were alarm'd; — shepherds and flocks
The rev'rend gray-beards rav'd and storm'd,
That beardless laddies

[1] Sheep that have died naturally or by accident, regarded and claimed as the shepherd's perquisite.

[2] A cant term for those religious opinions, which Dr. Taylor of Norwich has defended so strenuously. —R. B.——In regard to the New Light and Old Light controversy see note to the "Twa Herds."

Should think they better were inform'd
Than their auld daddies.

Frae less to mair it gaed to sticks; went
Frae words an' aiths to clours an' nicks; oaths blows and cuts
An' monie a fallow gat his licks, got a beating
Wi' hearty crunt; bang
An' some, to learn them for their tricks,
Were hang'd an' brunt. burnt

This game was play'd in monie lands,
An' Auld-light caddies bure sic hands, fellows bore such
That, faith, the youngsters took the sands
Wi' nimble shanks,
Till lairds forbade, by strict commands, land-owners
Sic bluidy pranks. such bloody

But New-light herds gat sic a cowe, got such a fright
Folk thought them ruin'd stick-an'-stowe, stump and rump
Till now amaist on ev'ry knowe, knoll
Ye'll find ane plac'd;
An' some their New-light fair avow,
Just quite barefac'd.

Nae doubt the Auld-light flocks are bleatin';
Their zealous herds are vex'd an' sweatin'; shepherds
Mysel', I've even seen them greetin' crying
Wi' girnin' spite, grinning
To hear the moon sae sadly lied on
By word an' write.

But shortly they will cowe the louns! quell the rascals
Some Auld-light herds in neebor towns neighbour
Are mind't, in things they ca' balloons,
To take a flight,
An' stay a month amang the moons
An' see them right.

Guid observation they will gie them;
An' when the auld moon's gaun to lea'e them, going to leave
The hindmost shaird, they'll fetch it wi' them, shred
Just i' their pouch,
An' when the New-light billies see them, fellows
I think they'll crouch!

Sae, ye observe that a' this clatter idle talk
Is naething but a "moonshine matter;"
But tho' dull prose-folk Latin splatter splutter
In logic tulzie, contention
I hope, we bardies ken some better know
Than mind sic brulzie. such broil

SONG—RANTIN' ROVIN' ROBIN.

TUNE—"*Daintie Davie.*"[1]

According to an Ayrshire tradition, a portion of the cottage in which the poet was born was blown in by "a blast o' Janwar' win'" on his birth-night. Gilbert his brother, however, who must have got the fact correctly from the mother with whom he lived so long, puts the date of the storm nine or ten days later. The song was composed in 1785.

There was a lad was born in Kyle,[2]
But whatna day o' whatna style,[3] — what
I doubt it's hardly worth the while
To be sae nice wi' Robin.

Robin was a rovin' boy,
Rantin' rovin', rantin' rovin'; — frolicsome
Robin was a rovin' boy,
Rantin' rovin' Robin.

Our monarch's hindmost year but ane — one
Was five and twenty days begun,[4]
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar' win'
Blew hansel in on Robin.
Robin was, &c.

The gossip keekit in his loof, — peeped — palm
Quo' scho, wha lives will see the proof, — quoth she
This waly boy will be nae coof, — goodly — no dolt
I think we'll ca' him Robin.
Robin was, &c.

He'll hae misfortunes great and sma',
But aye a heart aboon them a'; — always — above
He'll be a credit till us a',
We'll a' be proud o' Robin.
Robin was, &c.

[1] This was the tune Burns meant his verses to be sung to, and he took care to point out that the chorus was to be sung to the low section of the melody. Templeton, the famous Scottish singer, always sang it to a slightly varied form of the air known as "O gin ye war dead, guidman," and to this melody the words are now generally sung.

[2] The middle district of Ayrshire, having the district of Cunningham on the north and of Carrick on the south. It is divided into King's Kyle in the south, and Stewart Kyle in the north. Burns's birthplace is in the former, Lochlea and Mossgiel, to which the family removed, in the latter.

[3] The question of "styles", the New Style as against the Old Style, was one of no small consequence about the middle of the eighteenth century, and for some time after. The new mode of reckoning time, according to the reformed calendar, originally brought into use by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, was introduced into Britain in 1752, the time by our calendar being then eleven days behind the true time. In order to bring the new and amended method of dating into use "an act of parliament was passed by which eleven days were dropped from the month of September in reckoning, the 3rd of the month being designated the 14th. Many of the ignorant vulgar supposed that in this way they had been basely robbed of eleven days, and members of parliament, after assisting in passing the measure, were annoyed by people demanding that they should give them back their eleven days. The Scottish vulgar were long unwilling to accept the new mode of computing time, more especially since the pope—that 'man of sin'—had been the author of it; and the old style was long steadily adhered to—indeed the old style in some few matters still makes its influence felt."—*Thomson's History of the Scottish People.*

[4] "Jan. 25, 1759, the date of my bardship's vital existence."—R. B.——The "monarch" at this time was of course George II., whose reign lasted till 25th October, 1760, being followed by the long and eventful reign of George III.

But sure as three times three mak nine,
I see by ilka score and line, every
This chap will dearly like our kin',
So leeze me[1] on thee, Robin.
Robin was, &c.[2]

ELEGY

ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT RUISSEAUX.[3]

The date of the composition of the following piece cannot be fixed with certainty. It is one of the *Reliques* recovered by Cromek and first published in 1808.

Now Robin lies in his last lair,
He'll gabble rhyme, nor sing nae mair, no more
Cauld poverty, wi' hungry stare,
Nae mair shall fear him, frighten
Nor anxious fear, nor cankert care
E'er mair come near him.

To tell the truth, they seldom fasht him; troubled
Except the moment that they crusht him;
For sune as chance or fate had husht 'em,
Tho' e'er sae short,
Then wi' a rhyme or song he lasht 'em,
And thought it sport.—

Tho' he was bred to kintra wark, country work
And counted was baith wight and stark, both active strong
Yet that was never Robin's mark
To mak a man;
But tell him, he was learn'd and clark, literary
Ye roos'd him then![4] praised

[1] A phrase of delight or gratification, equivalent to "how fond or proud I am of you."

[2] This song is found in the Glenriddell abridgment of the poet's first Common-place Book, between September 1784 and June 1785. Another version of it was copied into the Edinburgh Common-place Book, 1787–1790, the first verse and chorus of which read thus:—

There was a birkie born in Kyle,
But whatna day o' whatna style,
I doubt it's hardly worth the while
To be sae nice wi' Davie.

Chorus—Leeze me on thy curly pow,
Bonnie Davie, dainty Davie,
Leeze me on thy curly pow
Thou'se aye my dainty Davie.

Line 3 in the fourth stanza runs:—
He'll gie his daddie's name a blaw.

[3] "Ruisseaux—a play on his own name."—CROMEK. *Ruisseau*, in French, signifies a brook or burn—hence the plural *Ruisseaux* = Burns.

[4] "Cromek found this fragment among the papers of Burns, and printed it in the *Reliques*."—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM. It was probably intended to close the Kilmarnock edition of Burns's poems, but was fortunately supplanted by the "Bard's Epitaph." Burns had studied French for a week or two with Murdoch in Ayr, and, to quote Gilbert Burns, "he had acquired such a knowledge of the language, as to read and understand any French author in prose." And in a letter to Peter Hill, bookseller, Edinburgh, written from Ellisland on 2d March, 1790, Burns himself says:—"A good copy, too, of Molière in French I much want. Any other good dramatic authors in that language I want also; but comic authors chiefly, though I should wish to have Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire too." He was rather inclined to make a display of any out-of-the-way acquirement he had. Hence the French *Ruisseaux* for *Burns*. But there may be here also a reference to Rousseau, who is most likely the person he had in his eye when he wrote in his Common-place Book in May, 1785,—"I sometimes think the character of a certain great man I have read of somewhere is very much *apropos* to myself—that he was a compound of great talent and great folly."

A FRAGMENT—"ONE NIGHT AS I DID WANDER."

TUNE—"*John Anderson my Jo.*"

The following lines were included in Burns's abridgment of his first Common-place Book, written for Captain Riddell, under date 1785.

One night as I did wander,
When corn begins to shoot,
I sat me down to ponder,
Upon an auld tree root:
Auld Ayr ran by before me,
And bicker'd to the seas; hurried
A cushat crooded o'er me, cooed
That echoed thro' the braes. hill slopes

FRAGMENTARY SONG—MY JEAN.

TUNE—"*The Northern Lass.*"

Though cruel fate should bid us part,
Far as the pole and line;
Her dear idea round my heart
Should tenderly entwine.
Tho' mountains frown and deserts howl,
And oceans roar between;
Yet, dearer than my deathless soul,
I still would love my Jean.[1]

EPISTLE TO JOHN GOUDIE,[3]

KILMARNOCK,

ON THE PUBLICATION OF HIS ESSAYS, AUGUST, 1785.

O Goudie! terror o' the Whigs,[2]
Dread o' black coats and rev'rend wigs!
Soor Bigotry, on his last legs, sour
Girns an' looks back, grins
Wishin' the ten Egyptian plagues
May seize you quick.

[1] Jean is, of course, Jean Armour; and it will be noticed that the last quatrain has a striking family resemblance to the second in "Of a' the Airts the Win' can blaw." The phrase "her dear idea" occurs in his mention of Jean in the "Epistle to Davie."

[2] This has no allusion to the political party called *Whigs*, but to the orthodox or Old Light portion of the Presbyterian church, as opposed to the New Light section, among whom views that had a rationalistic flavour to some extent prevailed. For some information regarding the New and Old Light parties, see note to the "Twa Herds."

[3] John Goldie or Goudie was the most talented and remarkable man of all Burns's local contemporaries to whom he addressed poetical epistles; and yet the epistle here given is one of his poorest. In addition to his other claims to remembrance, Goudie was the very first efficient patron of Burns, having been

Poor gapin', glowrin' Superstition, staring
Wae's me! she's in a sad condition;
Fie, bring Black Jock,[1] her state physician,
To see her water;
Alas! there's ground o' great suspicion
She'll ne'er get better.

instrumental in obtaining security for the printing of the Kilmarnock edition of his poems. *The Contemporaries of Burns* gives the following particulars concerning him.

Goldie was born in 1717, at Craigmill, in the parish of Galston, where his forefathers, who followed the occupation of millers, had occupied the premises nearly four hundred years. Never having been at any school, the elements of education were taught him by his mother, and he acquired the art of writing himself. He early displayed an uncommon taste for mechanics, having, before he attained his fifteenth year, completed a miniature mill with the humblest implements; and so perfect was the machine, that it was capable of grinding a boll of pease in the day. This effort of his boyish ingenuity gained him much credit in the neighbourhood.

It is said that he once travelled all the way to Glasgow on foot to purchase a small book on architecture, and returning the same evening, a distance altogether of nearly forty miles, he never closed his eyes in sleep until he had made himself fully master of its contents. Having attained considerable expertness in the use of edged tools, he determined on commencing business in Kilmarnock as a cabinet-maker, although he had never received the slightest instruction in the business. He was successful, however, beyond his most sanguine expectations, and greatly excelled in the ingenuity of his productions. Having realized a sufficient capital, he purchased a property at the Cross, in the lower premises of which he opened an extensive wine and spirit establishment, and for many years carried on a thriving and profitable trade. Still, books and the sciences engaged most of his attention.

Goldie had been brought up in sound Calvinistic principles, his parents being strict Antiburghers. In the course of his reading, however, a decided change took place in his religious opinions; and finally he may be said to have only stopped short at Deism. He believed firmly in the existence of a God, but repudiated almost every other fundamental tenet of orthodox belief. The first of his series of publications, popularly termed *Goudie's Bible*, and which is now extremely scarce, appeared about 1780, in three octavo volumes, printed at Glasgow. It was entitled *Essays on Various Important Subjects, Moral and Divine; being an Attempt to distinguish* True *from* False *Religion.* The Essays, as a literary production, display considerable reasoning powers, but are prolix and inelegant. A second edition appeared in 1785 with a London imprint, but emanating, we rather think, from the local press of John Wilson. This edition was entitled *Essays on Various Subjects, Moral and Divine*, in one volume, by John Goldie, to which was added, *The Gospel Recovered from a Captive State*, in five volumes, by a Gentle Christian.

The name of Goldie became notorious in consequence of his writings; and it would have been indeed surprising had the author of the much-reprobated essays escaped the attention of Burns. Goldie was exceedingly accessible; and the poet had seen him more than once at his house in Kilmarnock. One day, the author of the essays had occasion to be in the neighbourhood of Mossgiel: he called in passing; and in the course of his stay, Burns read over one or two of his manuscript poems. Goldie was highly delighted with the pieces, expressing his astonishment that he did not think of printing them. Burns at once unbosomed his circumstances—he was on the eve of setting out for the West Indies, and Wilson (of Kilmarnock) would not run the hazard of publication. "Weel, Robin," said Goldie, "I'll tell you what to do. Come your wa's down to Killie some day next week, and tak' pat-luck wi' me. I hae twa or three guid frien's that'll be able to set the press a-going." Burns was of course true to his appointment; and after dinner they were joined by the friends whom his entertainer had purposely invited. In the course of the evening, Burns read several of his pieces; and so delighted were the company, that they at once became security to Wilson for the printing of his work. During the printing of his volume, Burns was almost a daily visitor at Goldie's house, where he corrected the most of the proof-sheets, and wrote not a few of his letters. At this period the poet was rather abstemious in his habits, and his dress was composed of "hodden gray," then the universal garb of the agricultural population.

Goldie latterly became engaged in coal speculations, in which he was at first successful; but being in advanced years, he unfortunately connected himself in partnership with an individual who did not act fairly by him. Amidst old age and difficulties, however, his mind continued vigorous and active.

The last published work by Mr. Goldie was printed at the Kilmarnock press in 1808, by H. and S. Crawford. It formed a single volume, and was entitled *Conclusive Evidences against Atheism; in Vindication of a First Cause.* At the end of this book a prospectus was given of another work on which he had been engaged, viz.—*A Revise, or a Reform of the Present System of Astronomy*, in three volumes. The nature of the proposed reform was never thoroughly understood, as the author, then far advanced in life, did not live to carry the publication into effect. He died in 1809, in the ninety-second year of his age. He left a great many MSS., including letters from Burns and other men of celebrity with whom he corresponded, but these have been all lost or destroyed.

[1] The Rev. J. Russell, Kilmarnock.—R. B.—See notes to the "Holy Fair," and the "Twa Herds," in which pieces he is mentioned.

Auld Orthodoxy lang did grapple,
But now she's got an unco ripple,[1] terrible tearing
Haste, gie her name up i' the chapel,[2]
Nigh unto death;
See how she fetches at the thrapple, throat
An' gasps for breath.

Enthusiasm 's past redemption,
Gaen in a galloping consumption, gone
Not a' the quacks wi' a' their gumption,
Will ever mend her.
Her feeble pulse gies strong presumption, gives
Death soon will end her.

'Tis you and Taylor[3] are the chief,
Wha are to blame for this mischief;
But gin the L—d's ain folks gat leave, if own got
A toom tar barrel empty
And twa red peats wad send relief, would
An' end the quarrel.

For me, my skill's but very sma',
An' skill in prose I've nane ava'; none at all
But quietlenswise, between us twa, quietly
Weel may ye speed!
And tho' they sud you sair misca', should sorely abuse
Ne'er fash your head. trouble

E'en swinge the dogs, and thresh them sicker; surely
The mair they squeel aye chap the thicker; always lay on
And still 'mang hands a hearty bicker beaker
O' something stout;
It gars an owthor's pulse beat quicker, makes author's
And helps his wit.

There's naething like the honest nappy! ale
Whaur'll ye e'er see men sae happy,
Or women sonsie, saft, an' sappy, plump
'Tween morn and morn,
As them wha like to taste the drappie, little drop
In glass or horn?

I've seen me daz'd upon a time;
I scarce could wink or see a styme; spark

[1] Tearing or torture, as from passing through a rippling-comb, a toothed instrument, through which flax, hemp, &c., were drawn to separate the seed from the stalk.

[2] Mr. Russell's Kirk.—R. B.——There is a double joke here. To give one's name up in the chapel, is to give in one's name at church, to be prayed for. But chapel, while it means a place of worship generally, points directly to Mr. Russell's kirk then, and long after, locally called the Chapel, the High Church parish not having been formed till 1811.

[3] Dr. Taylor of Norwich.—R. B.——Dr. Taylor was the author of a work entitled *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin proposed to Free and Candid Examination*, favourite reading of the New Light party in Ayrshire at this time.

Just ae hauf-mutchkin does me prime— one half-pint
Ought less is little—
Then back I rattle on the rhyme,
As gleg's a whittle.[1] sharp knife

THIRD EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK.

Cromek printed this poem in 1808 from a MS. preserved by Burns, and discovered among "the sweepings of his study," which Dr. Currie and his collaborateurs did not consider worthy of publication. Both Allan Cunningham and Dr. Chambers erroneously state that it was first published by Lapraik in a volume of his own poems published in 1788.

Sept. 13th, 1785.

Guid speed an' furder to you, Johnnie, furtherance
Guid health, hale han's, and weather bonnie; hands
Now when ye're nickan down fu' cannie cutting quietly
The staff o' bread,
May ye ne'er want a stoup o' bran'y
To clear your head.

May Boreas never thresh your rigs, shake out the corn on your ridges
Nor kick your rickles aff their legs, heaps or small stacks
Sendin' the stuff o'er muirs an' haggs bog-holes
Like drivin' wrack;
But may the tapmast grain that wags topmost
Come to the sack.

I'm bizzie too, an' skelpin' at it, working vigorously
But bitter, daudin' showers hae wat it,[2] pelting wetted
Sae my auld stumpie pen I gat it got
Wi' muckle wark, much trouble
An' took my jocteleg[3] an' whatt it, knife cut (whetted)
Like ony clerk.

It's now twa month that I'm your debtor,
For your braw, nameless, dateless letter, fine
Abusin' me for harsh ill nature
On holy men,
While deil a hair yoursel' ye're better,
But mair profane. more

[1] The first five stanzas of this epistle, written in August, 1785, first appeared among the pieces published in Glasgow by Thomas Stewart in 1801. Stanzas six and seven are from the Glenriddell MS., published in 1874, which also gives the last two stanzas as concluding the poem. These were originally found pencilled in the poet's Edinburgh Common-place Book, and were published by Cromek in 1808. Cunningham says that they formed part of the first "Epistle to Lapraik," and that he had seen a copy of which they formed a part, coming before the third stanza from the end. They certainly might come in there quite as well as here.

[2] This refers to the harvest of the year (1785), which was very stormy and late, so much so that the poet, in his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore, declares that he and his brother lost half their crop.

[3] "*Jocteleg*, a folding-knife. The etymology of this word remained long unknown, till not many years ago, that an old knife was found having this inscription *Jacques de Liège*, the name of the cutler. Thus it is in exact analogy with *Andrea di Ferrara*."—LORD HAILES.

This etymology receives confirmation from the fact mentioned by Grose, that Scotland was formerly supplied with cutlery from Liège.

But let the kirk-folk ring their bells,
Let's sing about our noble sel's; — selves
We'll cry nae jauds frae heathen hills — call no jades from
To help, or roose us, — praise
But browster wives and whiskie stills, — ale-house
They are the muses.

Your friendship, sir, I winna quat it, — will not quit
An' if ye mak' objections at it,
Then han' in nieve some day we'll knot it — fist
An' witness take,
An' when wi' usquabae we've wat it, — whisky wetted
It winna break.

But if the beast and branks be spar'd — bridle
Till kye be gaun without the herd, — cows going cowboy
An' a' the vittel in the yard, — grain (victual)
An' theekit right, — thatched
I mean your ingle-side to guard — fire-side
Ae winter night. — one

Then muse-inspirin' aqua-vitæ
Shall make us baith sae blythe an' witty,
Till ye forget ye're auld and gutty, — paunchy
An' be as canty — hearty
As ye were nine years less than thretty,
Sweet ane an' twenty.

But stooks are cowpet wi' the blast, — overturned
An' now the sun keeks in the west, — peeps
Then I maun rin amang the rest — must run
An' quat my chanter; — musical pipe
Sae I subscribe mysel' in haste,
Yours, Rab the Ranter.[1]

EPISTLE TO THE REV. JOHN M'MATH,

ENCLOSING A COPY OF "HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER," WHICH HE HAD REQUESTED.

Sept. 17th, 1785.

While at the stook the shearers cow'r — reapers
To shun the bitter blaudin' show'r, — pelting
Or in gulravage rinnin' scour[2] — confusion running
To pass the time,
To you I dedicate the hour
In idle rhyme.[3]

[1] This is the name of the piper in the celebrated song "Maggie Lauder," whence Burns has likely sportively borrowed it. He seems to have prided himself on being a "rantin" or jovial fellow.

[2] Running in a confused, disorderly manner, like boys when leaving school.—CROMEK.

[3] This is another allusion to the disastrous harvest of the year. See note 2 in preceding page.

My musie, tir'd wi' mony a sonnet
On gown, an' ban,[1] an' douce black bonnet,[2] grave
Is grown right eerie now she's done it, frightened
Lest they should blame her,
An' rouse their holy thunder on it,
And anathem her.

I own 'twas rash, an' rather hardy,
That I, a simple, kintra bardie, country
Should meddle wi' a pack sae sturdy,
Wha, if they ken me, know
Can easy, wi' a single wordie,
Lowse h–ll upon me. unloose

But I gae mad at their grimaces,
Their sighin', cantin', grace-proud faces,
Their three-mile prayers, and hauf-mile graces,[3]
Their raxin' conscience, stretching
Whase greed, revenge, an' pride disgraces
Waur nor their nonsense. worse than

There's Gaun[4] miska't waur than a beast, abused worse
Wha has mair honour in his breast
Than mony scores as guid's the priest
Wha sae abus't him;
An' may a bard no crack his jest
What way they've use't him?

See him the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word an' deed,[5]
An' shall his fame an' honour bleed
By worthless skellums, wretches
An' not a muse erect her head
To cowe the blellums? frighten the babblers

O Pope, had I thy satire's darts
To gie the rascals their deserts,
I'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts,
An' tell aloud
Their jugglin' hocus-pocus arts
To cheat the crowd.

God knows, I'm no the thing I should be,
Nor am I even the thing I could be,
But twentv times, I rather would be
An atheist clean,

[1] The black gown and cambric bands, forming the characteristic dress of the Presbyterian clergyman.

[2] The popular term applied to a church elder.

[3] Learn three-mile prayers and half-mile graces.
—*Dedication to Gavin Hamilton*, July, 1786.

[4] Gavin Hamilton.—R. B.

[5] That he's the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word and deed,
It's no thro' terror of d-mn-tion, &c.
—*Dedication to Gavin Hamilton.*

Than under gospel colours hid be,
Just for a screen.

An honest man may like a glass,
An honest man may like a lass,
But mean revenge, an' malice fause, false
He'll still disdain,
An' then cry zeal for gospel laws,
Like some we ken.

They take religion in their mouth;
They talk o' mercy, grace an' truth,
For what? to gie their malice skouth scope
On some puir wight,
An' hunt him down, o'er right an' ruth,
To ruin straight.

All hail, Religion! maid divine!
Pardon a muse sae mean as mine,
Who in her rough imperfect line
Thus daurs to name thee;
To stigmatize false friends of thine
Can ne'er defame thee.

Tho' blotcht an' foul wi' mony a stain,
An' far unworthy of thy train,
With trembling voice I tune my strain
To join with those,
Who boldly dare thy cause maintain
In spite of foes:

In spite o' crowds, in spite o' mobs,
In spite o' undermining jobs,
In spite o' dark banditti stabs
At worth an' merit,
By scoundrels, even wi' holy robes,
But hellish spirit.

O Ayr, my dear, my native ground,
Within thy presbyterial bound
A candid lib'ral band is found
Of public teachers,
As men, as Christians too renown'd,
An' manly preachers.

Sir, in that circle you are nam'd;
Sir, in that circle you are fam'd;
An' some, by whom your doctrine's blam'd
(Which gies you honour),
Even, sir, by them your heart's esteem'd,
An' winning manner.

Pardon this freedom I have ta'en,
An' if impertinent I've been,
Impute it not, good sir, to ane
Whase heart ne'er wrang'd ye,
But to his utmost would befriend
Ought that belang'd ye.[1]

SECOND EPISTLE TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.

This epistle was probably penned about October, 1785.

AULD NEIBOR, — neighbour
I'm three times doubly o'er your debtor,
For your auld-farrant, frien'ly letter; — sagacious
Tho' I maun say't, I doubt ye flatter, — must
Ye speak sae fair:
For my puir, silly, rhymin' clatter — babble
Some less maun sair. — must serve

Hale be your heart, hale be your fiddle;
Lang may your elbuck jink an' diddle, — elbow jerk and shake
To cheer you thro' the weary widdle — struggle
O' war'ly cares, — worldly
Till bairns' bairns kindly cuddle — fondle
Your auld, gray hairs.

But, Davie, lad, I'm rede ye're glaikit; — informed thoughtless
I'm tauld the Muse ye hae negleckit:
An' gif it's sae, ye sud be licket — if should be beaten
Until ye fyke; — fidget
Sic hauns as you sud ne'er be faikit, — such hands spared exertion
Be hain't wha like. — spared

For me, I'm on Parnassus' brink,
Rivin' the words to gar them clink; — make rhyme
Whyles daz'd wi' love, whyles daz'd wi' drink, — sometimes
Wi' jads or masons; — jades
An' whyles, but aye owre late, I think — always too
Braw sober lessons. — fine

Of a' the thoughtless sons o' man,
Commen' me to the bardie clan;
Except it be some idle plan
O' rhymin' clink,

[1] The gentleman to whom this epistle is addressed, was assistant to the Rev. Peter Wodrow, minister of Tarbolton, and an adherent of the New Light party. It inclosed a copy of "Holy Willie's Prayer," which he had requested from the author. M'Math fell into dissipated habits, resigned his charge, and afterwards enlisted as a common soldier. His misfortunes and miseries arose from, or were intensified by, his having become a hypochondriac. He died poor and neglected, in the isle of Mull, in 1825.

The devil haet, that I sud ban, the devil a bit should swear
They ever think.

Nae thought, nae view, nae scheme o' livin', no
Nae cares to gie us joy or grievin':
But just the pouchie put the nieve in, pocket fist
An' while ought's there,
Then, hiltie skiltie, we gae scrievin', helter skelter careering
An' fash nae mair. bother no more

Leeze me on rhyme! it's aye a treasure, rhyme's the thing!
My chief, amaist my only pleasure, almost
At hame, a-fiel', at wark or leisure,
The Muse, poor hizzie! girl (hussy)
Tho' rough an' raploch be her measure, coarse
She's seldom lazy.

Haud to the Muse, my dainty Davie; hold
The warl' may play you monie a shavie; trick
But for the Muse, she'll never leave ye,
Tho' e'er sae puir,
Na, even tho' limpin' wi' the spavie spavin
Frae door to door.[1]

SONG—YOUNG PEGGY BLOOMS.[2]

TUNE—"*Last time I cam' o'er the muir.*"

This is one of the poet's earliest songs contributed to Johnson's *Musical Museum:* it stands No 78 in the first volume of that work, and was written in October, 1785.

Young Peggy blooms our bonniest lass,
Her blush is like the morning,
The rosy dawn, the springing grass,
With early gems adorning:
Her eyes outshine the radiant beams
That gild the passing shower,
And glitter o'er the crystal streams,
And cheer each fresh'ning flower.

[1] This epistle was prefixed to the poems of David Sillar, published at Kilmarnock, 1789. In regard to the person to whom it is addressed see note to "Epistle to Davie," above.

[2] Miss Margaret, or Peggy Kennedy, a relative of Mrs. Gavin Hamilton, was the daughter of a Carrick landed proprietor. Burns met her in Mauchline during the autumn of 1785, and was much taken with her spirit and beauty. She was seventeen, and understood to be betrothed to Captain MacDoual, the representative of the oldest and richest family in Galloway. Burns wrote to her a respectful letter, in which this song was inclosed. Her subsequent history is most painful. Says Mr. Chambers: "While thus in the fair way to a dignified position in life, the powers of Honour, Love, and Truth had already been outraged, and a train of circumstances commenced, which was to end in the loss of her good name and her early death." It is supposed, on not very conclusive evidence, however, that her sad fate suggested to the poet the deathless "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon."

Her lips more than the cherries bright,
A richer dye has grac'd them,
They charm th' admiring gazer's sight,
And sweetly tempt to taste them:
Her smile is as the ev'ning, mild,
When feather'd pairs are courting,
And little lambkins wanton wild,
In playful bands disporting.

Were Fortune lovely Peggy's foe,
Such sweetness would relent her,
As blooming Spring unbends the bow
Of surly, savage Winter.
Detraction's eye no aim can gain
Her winning powers to lessen;
And fretful envy grins in vain,
The poison'd tooth to fasten.

Ye pow'rs of Honour, Love, and Truth,
From ev'ry ill defend her;
Inspire the highly favour'd youth
The destinies intend her.
Still fan the sweet connubial flame
Responsive in each bosom;
And bless the dear parental name
With many a filial blossom.

SONG—THE BRAES O' BALLOCHMYLE.[1]

TUNE—"*The Braes o' Ballochmyle.*"

The Catrine[2] woods were yellow seen,
The flowers decay'd on Catrine lee,
Nae lav'rock sang on hillock green, lark
But nature sicken'd on the ee. eye
Thro' faded groves Maria sang,
Hersel' in beauty's bloom the while,
And aye the wild-wood echoes rang,
Fareweel the braes o' Ballochmyle! slopes

[1] Ballochmyle, the ancient seat of the Whitefoord family, passed into the hands of Mr. Alexander (see note to the "Lass of Ballochmyle"). Maria Whitefoord (afterwards Mrs. Cranston), the heroine of this song, was the eldest daughter of Sir John Whitefoord, to whom Burns, in one of his letters, acknowledges his obligations, as being one of the first gentlemen in Ayrshire who discovered the genius of the poet. The song (the date of which is probably about the end of the autumn of 1785) was written as a farewell to the family inheritance. The tune is the production of the poet's friend Allan Masterton, writing-master, Edinburgh, the "Allan" of "Willie brew'd a peck o' maut."

[2] Catrine was a fine estate immediately adjoining that of Ballochmyle, and was in the poet's time owned by Professor Matthew Stewart, and his more celebrated son, Professor Dugald Stewart.

Low in your wintry beds, ye flowers,
Again ye'll flourish fresh and fair;
Ye birdies dumb, in with'ring bowers,
Again ye'll charm the vocal air.
But here, alas! for me nae mair — no more
Shall birdie charm, or floweret smile;
Fareweel the bonnie banks of Ayr,
Fareweel, fareweel! sweet Ballochmyle!

HALLOWEEN.[1]

The following poem will, by many readers, be well enough understood; but for the sake of those who are unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, notes are added, to give some account of the principal charms and spells of that night, so big with prophecy to the peasantry in the west of Scotland. The passion of prying into futurity makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such should honour the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it, among the more unenlightened in our own.—R. B., 1786.——Halloween or Halloweven is the eve or vigil of All-Saints' Day (also called All-Hallows or Hallowmas, 1st November).

> Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
> The simple pleasures of the lowly train;
> To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
> One native charm, than all the gloss of art.—GOLDSMITH.

Upon that night, when fairies light
On Cassillis Downans[2] dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze, — leas
On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for Colean the route is ta'en,
Beneath the moon's pale beams;

[1] Halloween is thought to be a night when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings are all abroad on their baneful, midnight errands; particularly those aerial people, the fairies, are said on that night to hold a grand anniversary.—R. B.

"'Halloween' is now almost an obsolete word, and the liveliest of all festivals that used to usher in the winter with one long night of mirthful mockery of superstitious fancies, not unattended with stirrings of imaginative fears in many a simple breast, is gone with many customs of the good old time, not among townfolks only, but dwellers in rural parishes far withdrawn from the hum of crowds, where all such rites originate and latest fall into desuetude. The present wise generation of youngsters care little or nothing about a poem which used to drive their grandfathers and grandmothers half-mad with merriment, when boys and girls gathered in a circle round some choice reciter, who, though perhaps endowed with no great memory for grammar, had half of Burns by heart. Many of them, doubtless, are of opinion that it is a silly affair. . . . In practice extinct, to elderly people it survives in poetry; and there the body of the harmless superstition, in its very form and presence, is embalmed."—PROF. WILSON.——Professor Wilson is here a little too sweeping in his statements. Halloween has now, no doubt, lost much of its importance as a popular festival, but it continues to be kept up to some little extent both in town and country. Probably Burns's own poem has had a good deal to do with keeping it alive.

[2] Certain little, romantic, rocky, green hills, in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the Earls of Cassillis.—R. B.——Cassillis House or Castle stands on a beautiful *haugh* on the left bank of the Doon, about 4 miles north-east of Maybole. The lands, and probably also the castle of Cassillis, appear to have passed, in the reign of David II., from a family named Montgomery, into the possession of Sir John Kennedy of Dunure, direct male ancestor of the present Marquis of Ailsa. At the beginning of the sixteenth century it must have been the chief residence of this powerful race, as David, third Lord Kennedy, was, about 1510, created Earl of Cassillis. This nobleman fell at Flodden, with many of his followers. Tradition tells a well-known tale in connection with Cassillis Castle and its owners. While John, the sixth earl, was attending the Assembly of Divines at Westminster

There, up the cove,[1] to stray an' rove
Amang the rocks and streams
To sport that night:

Amang the bonnie winding banks,
Where Doon rins, wimplin', clear, runs

in 1643, his consort is said to have been seduced away from this house by a party of gypsies, supposed to have been headed by a lover in disguise; the consequence of this imprudence was her confinement for life in a tower belonging to her husband in the neighbouring town of Maybole, while those who had decoyed her away were hanged on a tree in front of the castle. These circumstances are more particularly related in the old ballad of *Johnnie Faa*, which is sung to a beautiful air; but it is proper to state that great doubt hangs over them. In a music-book, known from unquestionable evidence to have been written before 1620, this very air is found, under the title of "Lady Cassillis's Lilt;" which evinces that it could not have been composed for the wife of the sixth earl (that lady having been born in 1607), in whatever way the verses of the ballad may have taken their origin. Cassillis Castle continued to be the principal residence of the family till the extinction of the main line in 1759, when the titles were adjudged to Sir Thomas Kennedy, of Colzean, a son of the third earl. (See below.) Cassillis Castle, however, is still one of the seats of the family. The Cassillis Downans are three or four small hills rising about a quarter of a mile to the south of the castle, near the road between Maybole and Dalrymple. The largest—that nearest to the house—appears to be three hundred feet above the level of the Doon; the second is somewhat lower; and one or two others are greatly less marked. They are covered with green sward, through which, in some places, the rock may be seen; and hence Burns has described them in the note as "rocky." On the top of the highest there is a circular mound, with a breach in it to the west, as if designed for a means of access. It is probable that this was an early fort, more particularly as the farm on the slope of the hill bears the name of Dunree—obviously Dun-righ, the king's castle. The peculiar forms of these hillocks, and their rising in the midst of a generally level country, are circumstances which could not fail to excite superstitious ideas in an unlettered people. They were, accordingly, down to Burns's time, regarded as the work of fairies, and a peculiar scene of their midnight revels. In reality, they are masses of trap.

[1] A noted cavern near Colean House, called The Cove of Colean; which, as Cassillis Downans, is famed in country story for being a favourite haunt of fairies.—R. B.——Colzean Castle (Burns's spelling corresponds with the common pronunciation), the principal seat of the Marquises of Ailsa (for that title was bestowed in 1831 on the fourteenth Earl of Cassillis), is situated upon the verge of a great basaltic cliff, on the coast of Carrick, about two miles from the village of Kirkoswald. With marine sublimity on the one side, and the extreme of sylvan beauty on the other, it is scarcely possible to imagine a situation more worthy of the chief of whose ancestors it was said—

'Twixt Wigton and the town o' Ayr,
Portpatrick and the cruives of Cree,
Nae man need think for to bide there,
Unless he court wi' Kennedie.

The lands of Colzean in the sixteenth century were the property of Sir Thomas Kennedy, second son of Gilbert, third Earl of Cassillis. The former castle, connected with the lands, was built soon after by this individual. Sir Archibald Kennedy of Colzean, great-grandson of Sir Thomas, is said to have acquired some notoriety as a *persecutor* (of the Covenanters), and tradition states, that after the Revolution, he was sometimes obliged for his safety to the *coves* (that is *caves*) beneath his mansion. By his wife, one of the daughters of General David Leslie, Lord Newark, he had four daughters, the second of whom, Susanna, distinguished for extraordinary beauty, became the wife of Alexander, ninth Earl of Eglinton. In her youth she patronized Ramsay, who dedicates the "Gentle Shepherd" to her; and in her old age she received a visit from Dr. Johnson, at her dotarial seat of Auchans, near Dundonald. On the extinction of the main line of the Cassillis family, in the person of John, the eighth earl, in 1759, the title and family estates became the inheritance of Sir Thomas Kennedy of Colzean, who accordingly—though not without some litigation—became ninth Earl of Cassillis. It was now deemed necessary that the house of Colzean should be rebuilt; and this task was accordingly commenced in 1777 by David, the tenth earl, brother of the preceding. The plan of the new mansion was by Robert Adam. It presents, along the verge of the precipice, a range of lofty castellated masses, and with its outbuildings, splendid terraced garden, &c., it covers an area of four acres. The impression conveyed by the mansion, on approaching it through the far-spreading glades of an ancient park, is that of baronial dignity, affluence, and taste; surveyed from the sea, or from the beach, it suggests the idea of those eyrie-like fortresses of old, which took so much strength from nature as to appear to smile defiance at all the hostile efforts of mere human power. The interior of the castle is remarkable for an extensive and valuable collection of arms and armour. The coves are situated directly underneath the castle. They appear simply natural chinks left in the basalt in the process of its volcanic formation. Burns, during his residence near Kirkoswald, must have often heard of their reputation as haunts of the fairies. They are six in number, and are thus described in the Rev. Mr. Biggar's statistical account of the parish of Kirkoswald, written in the end of the 18th century: "Of the three towards the west, the largest has its entry as low as high-water mark. The roof is about fifty feet high, and has the appearance as if two large rocks had fallen together, forming a Gothic arch, though

Where Bruce[1] ance rul'd the martial ranks, — ance = once
An' shook his Carrick spear,
Some merry, friendly, country-folks
Together did convene,
To burn their nits, an' pou their stocks, — nits; pou = pull; stocks = colewort plants
An' haud their Halloween — haud = hold
Fu' blythe that night.

The lasses feat, an' cleanly neat, — feat = spruce
Mair braw than when they're fine; — braw = more well-dressed
Their faces blythe, fu' sweetly kythe — kythe = show
Hearts leal, an' warm, and kin': — leal = loyal
The lads sae trig, wi' wooer-babs, — trig = smart; wooer-babs = love-knots
Weel knotted on their garten, — garten = garter
Some unco blate, an' some wi' gabs, — unco blate = extremely bashful; gabs = chatter
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin' — gar = make; gang startin' = begin beating
Whiles fast at night. — whiles = sometimes

Then first and foremost thro' the kail, — kail = coleworts
Their stocks[2] maun a' be sought ance; — maun = must
They steek their een, an' graip, an' wale, — steek = close; graip = grope; wale = choose
For muckle anes an' straught anes. — muckle = big; straught = straight
Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift, — hav'rel = half-witted; drift = drove
An' wander'd thro' the bow-kail, — bow-kail = cabbage
An' pou't, for want o' better shift, — pou't = pulled
A runt was like a sow-tail, — runt = stem
Sae bow't that night. — bow't = crooked

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane, — yird = earth; nane = none
They roar and cry a' throu'ther; — throu'ther = through each other
The vera wee things, todlin', rin — vera = very; todlin' = toddling
Wi' stocks out-owre their shouther; — shouther = shoulder
An' gif the custoc's sweet or sour, — custoc = inner stem
Wi' joctelegs they taste them; — joctelegs = pocket-knives

very irregular; it extends inwards about two hundred feet, and varies in breadth. It communicates with the other two, which are both considerably less, but of much the same irregular form. Towards the east are the other three coves, which likewise communicate with each other. They are nearly of the same height and figure with the others; but their dimensions have not been ascertained. To the largest of the three westmost coves [those immediately under the castle] is a door or entry, built of freestone with a window three feet above the door, of the same kind of work; above both of these is an apartment, from which might be sent down whatever could annoy the assailants of the door." We have seen reason to surmise, that this mason work is as old as the former mansion of Colzean: it gives the place all the appearance of having been designed as a habitation, and one calculated to protect its inmates from hostile assault.

[1] The famous family of that name, the ancestors of Robert, the great deliverer of his country, were Earls of Carrick.—R. B.

[2] The first ceremony of Halloween is, pulling each a *stock*, or plant of kail. They must go out, hand in hand, with eyes shut, and pull the first they meet with: its being big or little, straight or crooked, is prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their spells—the husband or wife. If any *yird*, or earth, stick to the root, that is *tocher*, or fortune; and the taste of the *custoc*, that is, the heart of the stem, is indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly, the stems, or to give them their ordinary appellation, the *runts*, are placed somewhere above the head of the door; and the Christian names of the people whom chance brings into the house, are, according to the priority of placing the *runts*, the names in question.—R. B.

Syne coziely, aboon the door, — then snugly above
Wi' cannie care they place them — gentle
To lie that night.

The lasses staw frae 'mang them a' — stole from among
To pou their stalks o' corn;[1] — pull
But Rab slips out, an' jinks about, — dodges
Behint the muckle thorn:
He grippet Nelly hard and fast;
Loud skirl'd a' the lasses; — screeched
But her tap-pickle maist was lost,
When kiutlin' in the fause-house[2] — cuddling
Wi' him that night.

The auld guidwife's weel-hoordet nits[3] — well-hoarded nuts
Are round an' round divided,
An' monie lads' and lasses' fates,
Are there that night decided:
Some kindle, couthie, side by side, — lovingly
An' burn thegither trimly; — together
Some start awa wi' saucie pride,
And jump out-owre the chimlie — chimney
Fu' high that night.

Jean slips in twa, wi' tentie ee; — heedful eye
Wha 'twas she wadna tell; — would not
But this is *Jock*, an' this is *me*,
She says in to hersel':
He bleez'd owre her, an' she owre him, — blazed
As they wad never mair part; — would
Till, fuff! he started up the lum, — chimney
And Jean had e'en a sair heart — sore
To see't that night.

Poor Willie, wi' his bow-kail runt, — cabbage-stem
Was brunt wi' primsie Mallie; — burnt prudish
An' Mary,[4] nae doubt, took the drunt, — pet
To be compar'd to Willie:
Mall's nit lap out wi' pridefu' fling, — leaped
An' her ain fit it brunt it; — own foot
While Willie lap, and swoor, by jing! — swore
'Twas just the way he wanted
To be that night.

[1] They go to the barn-yard and pull each, at three several times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wants the *top-pickle*, that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question will come to the marriage-bed anything but a maid.—R. B.

[2] When the corn is in a doubtful state, by being too green, or wet, the stack-builder, by means of old timber, &c., makes a large apartment in his stack, with an opening in the side which is fairest exposed to the wind: this he calls a *fause-house*.—R. B.

[3] Burning the nuts is a famous charm. They name the lad and lass to each particular nut, as they lay them in the fire, and accordingly as they burn quietly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship will be.—R. B.

[4] Currie altered *Mary* here to *Mallie* in his edition of our poet's works, to the great displeasure of one of Burns's editors—the Rev. Hamilton Paul—who was at the trouble of entering into a pretty long dissertation to prove the propriety of here using the full name *Mary*, and in other parts of the verse its diminutives, *Mallie* and *Mall*.

Nell had the fause-house in her min',
She pits hersel' an' Rob in; puts
In loving bleeze they sweetly join,
Till white in ase they're sobbin': ashes
Nell's heart was dancin' at the view,
She whisper'd Rob to leuk for't: look
Rob, stownlins, prie'd her bonnie mou', stealthily tasted mouth
Fu' cozie in the neuk for't, nook
Unseen that night.

But Merran sat behint their backs,
Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
She lea'es them gashin' at their cracks, conversing chat
And slips out by hersel':
She thro' the yard the nearest taks,
An' to the kiln she goes then,
An' darklins grapit for the bauks, groped cross-beams
And in the blue-clue[1] throws then,
Right fear't that night. frightened

An' aye she win't, an' aye she swat, winded sweated
I wat she made nae jaukin'; wot dallying
Till something held within the pat, pot
Guid L—d! but she was quaukin'!
But whether 'twas the deil himsel',
Or whether 'twas a bauk-en', beam-end
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
She didna wait on talkin',
To spier that night. inquire

Wee Jenny to her granny says,
"Will ye go wi' me, grannie?
I'll eat the apple[2] at the glass,
I gat frae uncle Johnie:" got from
She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt, puffed volume of smoke
In wrath she was sae vap'rin',
She notic't na, an aizle brunt hot ember
Her braw new worset apron fine worsted
Out thro' that night.

"Ye little skelpie-limmer's face![3]
I daur you try sic sportin', dare such
As seek the foul Thief ony place,
For him to spae your fortune: foretell

[1] Whoever would, with success, try this spell, must strictly observe these directions: Steal out, all alone, to the *kiln*, and, darkling, throw into the *pot* a clue of blue yarn; wind it in a new clue of the old one; and, towards the latter end, something will hold the thread; demand *wha hauds? i.e.* who holds? an answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the Christian and surname of your future spouse.—R. B.

[2] Take a candle, and go alone to a looking-glass; eat an apple before it, and some traditions say, you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion *to be*, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.—R. B.

[3] A technical term in female scolding.—*Burns's Glossary.*——A "skelpie limmer" is a hussy that deserves slapping.

Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!
Great cause ye hae to fear it;
For monie a ane has gotten a fright, many a one
An' liv'd an' dee'd deleeret delirious
On sic a night.

"Ae hairst afore the Sherra-moor,[1] one harvest
I mind't as weel's yestreen, remember it last night
I was a gilpey then, I'm sure thoughtless girl
I was na past fyfteen:
The simmer had been cauld an' wat,
An' stuff was unco green; extremely
An' aye a rantin' kirn we gat, jovial harvest-home
An' just on Halloween
It fell that night.

"Our stibble-rig was Rab M'Graen, leader of the reapers[2]
A clever, sturdy fallow;
His sin gat Eppie Sim wi' wean, son child
That liv'd in Achmacalla:[3]
He gat hemp-seed,[4] I mind it weel, remember
An' he made unco light o't; very
But monie a day was by himsel', beside himself
He was sae fairly frighted
That vera night."

Then up gat fechtin' Jamie Fleck, got fighting
An' he swoor by his conscience, swore
That he could saw hemp-seed a peck;
For it was a' but nonsense.
The auld guidman raught down the pock, reached bag
An' out a handfu' gied him;
Syne bad him slip frae 'mang the folk then
Sometime when nae ane see'd him,
An' try't that night.

He marches thro' amang the stacks,
Tho' he was something sturtin'; frightened
The graip he for a harrow taks, dung-fork
An' haurls at his curpin': drags crupper
An' ev'ry now an' then, he says,
"Hemp-seed, I saw thee,

[1] Battle of Sheriffmuir, Nov. 1715, between the Royalists under the Duke of Argyll, and the Jacobites under the Earl of Mar.

[2] Lit. stubble-ridge; hence, the reaper that took the ridge next to the part of the field already reaped.

[3] There is no place so named in Kyle or Carrick. A name was needed of a certain length, accent, and capacity for rhyme; hence the above coinage.

[4] Steal out unperceived, and sow a handful of hemp-seed; harrowing it with anything you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat now and then, "Hemp-seed, I saw thee, hemp-seed, I saw thee; and him (or her) that is to be my true-love, come after me and pou thee." Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked, in the attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say, "Come after me, and shaw thee," that is, show thyself: in which case it simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say, "Come after me, and harrow thee."—R. B.

An' her that is to be my lass,
Come after me, and draw thee,
As fast this night."

He whistl'd up "Lord Lenox' march"
To keep his courage cheerie;
Although his hair began to arch,
He was sae fley'd an' eerie: so frightened and nervous
Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle; groan and grunt
He by his shouther gae a keek, shoulder glance
An' tumbl'd wi' a wintle stagger
Out-owre that night.

He roar'd a horrid murder shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld came rinnin' out,
To hear the sad narration:
He swoor 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw, halting
Or crouchie Merran Humphie, crook-backed
Till, stop! she trotted thro' them a';—
And wha was it but grumphie the sow
Asteer that night! astir

Meg fain wad to the barn gaen would have gone
To winn three wechts o' naething;[1] winnow measures
But for to meet the deil her lane, herself alone
She pat but little faith in: put
She gies the herd a pickle nits, herd-boy few nuts
An' twa red-cheekit apples,
To watch, while for the barn she sets,
In hopes to see Tam Kipples
That vera night.

She turns the key wi' cannie thraw, gentle turn
An' owre the threshold ventures;
But first on Sawnie gies a ca',[2] gives a call
Syne bauldly in she enters: then boldly
A ratton rattled up the wa', rat wall
An' she cried, L—d, preserve her!
An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a', dung-pit
An' pray'd wi' zeal an' fervour,
Fu' fast that night.

[1] This charm must likewise be performed unperceived, and alone. You go to the barn, and open both doors, taking them off the hinges, if possible; for there is danger that the *being*, about to appear, may shut the doors, and do you some mischief. Then take that instrument used in winnowing the corn, which, in our country dialect, we call a *wecht;* and go through all the attitudes of letting down corn against the wind. Repeat it three times; and the third time an apparition will pass through the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure in question, and the appearance or retinue, marking the employment or station in life.—R. B.——The *wecht* is an implement shaped like a sieve, being a round shallow wooden vessel with a bottom made of hide or skin, used for lifting quantities of grain.

[2] She first calls out to the herd-boy, to give her a little courage from assurance of his proximity.

They hoy't out Will, wi' sair advice: urged
They hecht him some fine braw ane; promised
It chanc'd the stack he faddom'd thrice,[1] fathomed
Was timmer-propt for thrawin':
He taks a swirlie, auld moss-oak, knotty
For some black, gruesome carlin; hideous hag
An' loot a winze, an' drew a stroke, uttered an oath
Till skin in blypes came haurlin' shreds peeling
Aff's nieves that night. hands

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As canty as a kittlen; cheerful kitten
But, och! that night, amang the shaws, wooded dells
She got a fearfu' settlin'!
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
An' owre the hill gaed scrievin'; went careering
Whare three lairds' lands met at a burn,[2]
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays, sometimes over a rock streamlet
As thro' the glen it wimpl't:
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays; precipice
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't; eddy
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle; hurrying
Whyles cookit underneath the braes, popped sloping banks
Below the spreading hazel,
Unseen that night.[3]

Amang the brachens, on the brae, ferns
Between her and the moon,
The deil, or else an outler quey, outlying heifer
Gat up an' gae a croon: gave a moan
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool; almost leaped from its case (hull)
Near lav'rock-height she jumpit, lark
But mist a fit, an' in the pool lost her footing
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit, ears
Wi' a plunge that night.

[1] Take an opportunity of going, unnoticed, to a *bear stack*, and fathom it three times round. The last fathom of the last time, you will catch in your arms the appearance of your future conjugal yoke-fellow.—R. B. ——The particular stack mentioned in the text was propped up by pieces of timber, having settled or got twisted (*thrawn*) to one side. One of the props was a moss-oak or bog-oak, such as are found embedded in peat-bogs.

[2] You go out, one or more, for this is a social spell, to a south running spring or rivulet, where "three lairds' lands meet," and dip your left shirt sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Lie awake; and sometime near midnight, an apparition, having the exact figure of the grand object in question, will come and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.—R. B.——See the song of "Tam Glen" for an interesting reference to this spell, which in the case of Tam's sweetheart was used with the desired effect in calling up the likeness of Tam.

[3] "Those who understand the Scottish dialect will allow this to be one of the finest instances of description which the records of poetry afford. Though of a very different nature, it may be compared, in point of excellence, with Thomson's description of a river swollen by the rains of winter bursting through the straits that confine its torrents."—CURRIE. The verb to *cook* used above means literally to appear and disappear by turns.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
  The luggies three[1] are ranged, — hooped wooden dishes
And ev'ry time great care is ta'en,
  To see them duly changed:
Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
  Sin' Mar's year[2] did desire,
Because he gat the toom dish thrice, — empty
  He heav'd them on the fire
    In wrath that night.

Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks, — chat
  I wat they didna weary;
An' unco tales, an' funnie jokes, — strange
  Their sports were cheap an' cheery;
Till butter'd so'ns,[3] wi' fragrant lunt, — sowens steam
  Set a' their gabs a-steerin'; — mouths a-moving
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt, — then spirits
  They parted aff careerin'
    Fu' blythe that night.[4]

FRAGMENT—HER FLOWING LOCKS.

Of the date of the composition of this fragment, or of the subject of it, nothing certain seems to be known.

Her flowing locks, the raven's wing,
Adown her neck and bosom hing;
(How sweet unto that breast to cling,)
  And round that neck entwine her!
Her lips are roses wat wi' dew,
O, what a feast, her bonnie mou'!
Her cheeks a mair celestial hue,
  A crimson still diviner.

[1] Take three dishes; put clean water in one, foul water in another, leave the third empty; blindfold a person, and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged; he (or she) dips the left hand: if by chance in the clean water, the future husband or wife will come to the bar of matrimony a maid; if in the foul a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretells, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered.—R. B.

[2] 1715, the year in which the Earl of Mar raised an insurrection. See note on Sheriffmuir above.

[3] Sowens, with butter instead of milk to them, is always the Halloween supper.—R.B.——*Sowens*, flummery, made of the dust of oatmeal remaining among the seeds (husks), steeped and soured.—JAMIESON.

[4] In *Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine* for November, 1780, appeared a poem of twelve stanzas, by John Mayne, on the subject of Halloween. It is very probable that it fell under the notice of Burns and suggested his poem. We append two or three stanzas of Mayne's composition:—

Ranged round a bleezing ingle side,
Where nowther cauld nor hunger bide,
The farmer's house, wi' secret pride,
  Will a' convene.
* * * * * *
Placed at their head the gudewife sits,
And deals round apples, pears, and nits,
Syne tells her guests, how, at sic bits
  Where she had been,
Bogles hae gart folk tyne their wits
  At Halloween.
* * * * * *
But 'twere a langsome tale to tell,
The gates o' ilka charm and spell;
Ance gaun to saw hemp-seed himsel'
  Poor Jock M'Lean,
Plump in a filthy peat-pot fell
  At Halloween.

Of Burns's poem Lockhart says:—"'Halloween, a descriptive poem, perhaps even more exquisitely wrought than the 'Holy Fair,' and containing nothing that could offend the feelings of anybody, was produced about the same period. Burns's art had now reached its climax."

TO A MOUSE,

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER, 1785.[1]

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie, — smooth-skinned
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle! — hasty scamper
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee, — would be loath
Wi' murdering pattle![2] — plough-staff

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which maks thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve; — sometimes
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live! — must
A daimen-icker in a thrave[3]
'S a sma' request:
I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave, — remainder
And never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'! — fragile walls
An' naething, now, to big a new ane, — build
O' foggage green! — herbage
An' bleak December's winds ensuin',
Baith snell and keen! — both biting

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin' fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast, — snug
Thou thought to dwell;
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble, — stubble
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald, — without holding
To thole the winter's sleety dribble, — endure
An' cranreuch cauld! — hoar-frost

[1] John Blane, a farm-servant at Mossgiel in 1785, who died at Kilmarnock about the middle of the 19th century, used to tell of his pursuing a mouse, with the pattle or plough-staff, while Burns was ploughing. Burns told him to let it alone; and was observed to become very thoughtful. In the evening, he repeated to him his poem on the mouse, the most tender-hearted, perhaps, of all his productions.

[2] The plough-staff, used to clear away the adhering earth from the plough—also written *pettle*.

[3] An occasional ear of corn in a *thrave*, that is, twenty-four sheaves or two stooks. *Daimen*, is equivalent to *deeming*, judging, testing, and *icker*, to *ear* (of grain).

"Wee sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie."

—TO A MOUSE.

"Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie."

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane, not alone
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men,
Gang aft a-gley,[1] go often awry
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promis'd joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my ee, eye
On prospects drear;
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear.[2]

THE JOLLY BEGGARS.[3]

A CANTATA.

RECITATIVO.

When lyart leaves bestrew the yird, withered earth
Or, wavering like the bauckie-bird,[4] bat
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;
When hailstanes drive wi' bitter skyte, stroke
And infant frosts begin to bite,
In hoary cranreuch drest: hoar-frost
Ae night at e'en, a merry core corps
O' randie gangrel bodies, loose-living vagrant persons
In Poosie Nansie's[5] held the splore, frolic
To drink their orra duddies: superfluous rags

[1] This phrase:—

The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,—

and a couplet in the "Address to the Louse"—

O, wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as others see us!—

are so often quoted as to have become proverbial.

[2] "How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal nature; and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning! The 'Daisy' falls not unheeded under his ploughshare; nor the ruined nest of that "wee cowering timorous beastie," cast forth after all its provident pains to "thole the sleety dribble, and cranreuch cauld."—THOMAS CARLYLE.

[3] Composed apparently at Mossgiel before the close of 1785, and regarded by Burns himself as of little value, probably because his mother and brother looked on it with suspicion on account of the looseness of some of its sentiments. In September, 1793, he wrote to George Thomson that he had kept no copy of it, and had in fact forgotten its existence. On 3d August, 1799, the "Jolly Beggars" was published in chap-book form by Stewart and Meikle, Glasgow, with the exception of a portion which John Richmond had taken with him to Edinburgh; and two years later it was republished by Stewart in a complete form, Richmond having in the meantime supplied the missing portion. Along with it Stewart also printed other POEMS ASCRIBED TO ROBERT BURNS, THE AYRSHIRE BARD, not contained in any edition of his works hitherto published. So popular were these additional poems, especially the "Jolly Beggars," that another edition of a smaller size was issued from the same press during the same year.

[4] The older writers call it merely *the bak;* thus in Gawain Douglas's metrical translation of Virgil:—

The sonnys licht is nauer the wers, traist me,
Althochte the *bak* his bricht beames doth flee.

The comparison of the fluttering of the dry and withered leaves in the wintry blast, to the "wavering" flight of the bat is peculiarly appropriate.

[5] Poosie Nansie's, the scene of the "Jolly Beggars," is still pointed out in Mauchline. It was one of those places of resort in which the lowest of mankind—those ambiguous wretches who hang upon the skirts of society—the maimed beggar, the sturdy caird, the wandering tinker, the travelling ballad-singer—found a resting-place after the fatigues of the day, and when

Wi' quaffing and laughing,
They ranted and they sang; revelled
Wi' jumping and thumping
The vera girdle[1] rang. griddle

First, niest the fire, in auld red rags, nearest
Ane sat, weel brac'd wi' mealy bags
And knapsack a' in order;
His doxy lay within his arm,
Wi' usquebae and blankets warm, whisky
She blinket on her sodger;
And aye he gies the tozie drab tipsy
The tither skelpin' kiss, other resounding
While she held up her greedy gab,
Just like an aumous dish;[2] alms
Ilk smack still, did crack still, each
Just like a cadger's whup, hawker's whip
Then staggering, an' swaggering,
He roar'd this ditty up—

AIR.

TUNE—"*Soldier's Joy.*"

I am a son of Mars, who have been in many wars,
And show my cuts and scars wherever I come;
This here was for a wench, and that other in a trench,
When welcoming the French at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

My prenticeship I past where my leader breath'd his last,
When the bloody die was cast on the heights of Abram;[3]
I servèd out my trade when the gallant game was play'd,
And the Moro low was laid at the sound of the drum.[4]
Lal de daudle, &c.

I lastly was with Curtis, among the floating batt'ries,[5]
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb:

they lost in that "glory" which results from deep potations, the consciousness of their own degradation. John Richmond told Robert Chambers when he visited Mauchline, that one night when Burns, "Smith, the sleest pawkie thief," and Richmond were coming up the street in a state of partial intoxication, their attention was attracted by the noise of revelry issuing from this hostelry. At the instigation of Burns they went in, and entered *con spirito* into the scene of drunken frolic which they found going forward. Such was the source of the poet's inspiration, and such the scene, which a few touches of his pen have rendered immortal!

[1] The circular iron plate on which cakes are baked in Scottish households.

[2] The aumous dish was a wooden vessel, half platter, half bowl, with which every professional mendicant was formerly provided as part of his accoutrements. It was used to receive the aumous or alms, which was usually made in kind.

[3] The battle-ground before Quebec, where Wolfe fell in the arms of victory, September 1759.

[4] El Moro, a strong castle that defended the entrance of the harbour of St. Iago, an island near the southern shore of Cuba; stormed and taken by the British in 1762.

[5] The destruction of the Spanish floating batteries, during the siege of Gibraltar, in 1782, is here referred to. The services rendered by Captain Curtis on this occasion were of the highest value.

Yet let my country need me, with Eliott[1] to head me,
I'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

And now, tho' I must beg, with a wooden arm and leg,
And many a tatter'd rag hanging over my bum,
I'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle, and my callet,[2]
As when I us'd in scarlet to follow the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

What tho' with hoary locks, I must stand the winter shocks,
Beneath the woods and rocks, oftentimes for a home;
When the tother bag I sell, and the tother bottle tell,
I could meet a troop of h–ll at the sound of the drum.

RECITATIVO.

He ended; and the kebars sheuk — rafters
Aboon the chorus roar; — above
While frighted rattons backward leuk, — rats
And seek the benmost bore: — innermost hole

A fairy[3] fiddler frae the neuk, — corner
He skirl'd out encore! — screeched
But up arose the martial chuck,
And laid the loud uproar.

AIR.

TUNE—"*Soldier Laddie.*"

I once was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
And still my delight is in proper young men;
Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,
No wonder I'm fond of a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
To rattle the thundering drum was his trade;
His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,
Transported I was with my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch,
So the sword I forsook for the sake of the church,
He ventur'd the soul, and I risked the body,
'Twas then I prov'd false to my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

[1] George Augustus Eliott (Lord Heathfield), born 1717, died 1790, successfully defended Gibraltar against the Spaniards, during the famous siege of over three years and seven months, in 1779–83.

[2] "A beggar in his drink could not have laid such terms upon his callet."—SHAKSPEARE—*Othello.*

[3] This epithet is apparently used in the sense of little, puny.

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
The regiment at large for a husband I got;
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
I asked no more but a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

But the peace it reduc'd me to beg in despair,
Till I met my old boy at a Cunningham fair,
His rags regimental they flutter'd sae gaudy,
My heart it rejoic'd at a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

And now I have liv'd—I know not how long,
And still I can join in a cup or a song;
But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Poor Merry Andrew, in the neuk,
Sat guzzling wi' a tinkler hizzie; tinker wench
They mind't na wha the chorus teuk,
Between themselves they were sae busy;
At length, wi' drink and courting dizzy,
He stoiter'd up and made a face; staggered
Then turn'd and laid a smack on Grizzy,
Syne tun'd his pipes wi' grave grimace. then

AIR.

TUNE—"*Auld Sir Symon.*"

Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou, tipsy
Sir Knave is a fool in a session;[1]
He's there but a 'prentice I trow,
But I am a fool by profession.

My grannie she bought me a beuk, book
And I held awa to the school;
I fear I my talent misteuk;
But what will ye hae of a fool?

For drink I would venture my neck;
A hizzie's the half o' my craft; wench
But what could you other expect
Of ane that's avowedly daft? crazy

I ance was tied up like a stirk,[2] bullock
For civilly swearing and quaffing;

[1] This seems to mean when under a criminal indictment, during the session or sitting of a court.

[2] Referring to the punishment of the "jougs," which was an iron collar locked round an offender's neck so as to keep standing in some exposed position. Specimens of this instrument of punishment may still be seen, one attached to the pillar of the gate of the churchyard of Duddingston near Edinburgh, and another to the gable of the townhouse of Kilmaurs in Ayrshire.

I ance was abus'd i' the kirk,
For towsing a lass i' my daffin. rumpling fun

Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport,
Let naebody name wi' a jeer;
There's ev'n, I'm tauld, i' the court,
A tumbler ca'd the Premier.

Observ'd ye yon reverend lad
Maks faces to tickle the mob;
He rails at our mountebank squad,
It's rivalship just i' the job.

And now my conclusion I'll tell,
For faith I'm confoundedly dry,
The chiel that's a fool for himsel',
Gude L—d, is far dafter than I.

RECITATIVO.

Then niest outspak a raucle carlin, next sturdy beldam
Wha kent fu' weel to cleek the sterlin', knew hook
For monie a pursie she had hooked,
And had in monie a well been douked; ducked
Her love had been a Highland laddie,
But weary fa' the waefu' woodie![1] halter
Wi' sighs and sobs, she thus began
To wail her braw John Highlandman. fine

AIR.

TUNE—"*O an' ye were dead, guidman.*"

A Highland lad my love was born,
The Lawland laws he held in scorn;
But he still was faithfu' to his clan,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman. fine

CHORUS.

Sing, hey, my braw John Highlandman;
Sing, ho, my braw John Highlandman;
There's not a lad in a' the lan'
Was match for my John Highlandman.

With his philibeg and tartan plaid, kilt
And guid claymore down by his side,
The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

We rangèd a' from Tweed to Spey,
And liv'd like lords and ladies gay;

1 "A curse befall the woeful halter." For a long time the Highlanders were notoriously given to cattle-stealing or otherwise plundering the hated Lowlander, and many of them were hanged for such offences.

For a Lawland face he fearèd nane,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

They banish'd him beyond the sea,
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

But och! they catch'd him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast;
My curse upon them every one,
They've hang'd my braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

And now a widow, I must mourn
The pleasures that will ne'er return;
No comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

RECITATIVO.

A pigmy scraper wi' his fiddle,
Wha us'd at trysts and fairs to driddle, markets play wretchedly
Her strappin' limb and gaucy middle handsome buxom
(He reach'd nae higher),
Had hol'd his heartie like a riddle,
And blawn't on fire.

Wi' hand on hainch, and upward ee, haunch
He croon'd his gamut, ane, twa, three, hummed
Then, in an Arioso key,
The wee Apollo
Set aff, wi' Allegretto glee,
His giga solo.

AIR.

TUNE—"*Whistle o'er the lave o't.*"[1]

Let me ryke up to dight that tear, reach wipe
And go wi' me and be my dear,
And then your every care and fear
May whistle o'er the lave o't. rest

CHORUS.

I am a fiddler to my trade,
And a' the tunes that e'er I play'd,

[1] This melody was composed about the year 1720 by John Bruce, a musician in the town of Dumfries, and was published with variations in the last volume of Oswald's *Caledonian Pocket Companion.* Burns wrote another song to it, viz. that beginning—

First when Maggie was my care.

The sweetest still to wife or maid,
Was whistle o'er the lave o't.

At kirns and weddings we'se be there, harvest-homes we shall
And oh! sae nicely's we will fare;
We'll bowse about, till Daddie Care
Sings whistle o'er the lave o't.
I am, &c.

Sae merrily's the banes we'll pyke, pick
And sun oursells about the dyke,
And at our leisure, when ye like,
We'll whistle o'er the lave o't.
I am, &c.

But bless me wi' your heav'n o' charms
And while I kittle hair on thairms tickle cat-gut
Hunger, cauld, and a' sic harms,
May whistle o'er the lave o't.
I am, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird, tinker
As weel as poor gut-scraper;
He taks the fiddler by the beard,
And draws a roosty rapier— rusty
He swoor, by a' was swearing worth, swore
To speet him like a pliver, spit plover
Unless he wad from that time forth
Relinquish her for ever.

Wi' ghastly ee, poor tweedle-dee
Upon his hunkers bended, hams
And pray'd for grace, wi' ruefu' face,
And sae the quarrel ended.
But though his little heart did grieve
When round the tinkler prest her,
He feign'd to snirtle in his sleeve, laugh derisively
When thus the caird address'd her;

AIR.

TUNE—"*Clout the Caudron.*"

My bonny lass, I work in brass,
A tinkler is my station;[1]
I've travell'd round all Christian ground
In this my occupation.

[1] *Tinkler* and *caird* are here treated as synonymous terms; but we have been informed, on the authority of one of the fraternity of tinkers, that there is a difference; a tinker or *tinkler* is a workman, an artificer in brass and tin-plate, &c., a caird is not, the latter being merely a vagrant usually with rather loose notions as to *meum* and *tuum*. Neither tinker nor caird is now so common in Scotland as formerly.

I've ta'en the gold, an' been enroll'd
In many a noble squadron;
But vain they search'd, when off I march'd
To go and clout the cauldron. patch
I've ta'en the gold, &c.

Despise that shrimp, that wither'd imp,
Wi' a' his noise and cap'rin',
And tak' a share wi' those that bear
The budget and the apron. bag of tools
And by that stoup, my faith and houp, mug hope
And by that dear Kilbagie,[1]
If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant,
May I ne'er weet my craigie. wet my throat
And by that stoup, &c.

RECITATIVO.

The caird prevail'd—th' unblushing fair
In his embraces sunk,
Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair,
And partly she was drunk.
Sir Violino, with an air
That show'd a man o' spunk,
Wish'd unison between the pair,
And made the bottle clunk gurgle
To their health that night.

But hurchin Cupid shot a shaft,
That play'd a dame a shavie, trick
The fiddler rak'd her fore and aft,
Behint the chicken cavie. coop
Her lord, a wight o' Homer's craft,
Tho' limpin' wi' the spavie,
He hirpl'd up, and lap like daft, limped leaped like mad
And shor'd them Dainty Davie promised
O' boot that night. to boot

He was a care-defying blade
As ever Bacchus listed,
Tho' Fortune sair upon him laid, sorely
His heart, she ever miss'd it.
He had nae wish, but—to be glad,
Nor want, but—when he thirsted;
He hated nought but—to be sad:
And thus the Muse suggested
His sang that night.

[1] A peculiar sort of whisky; so called from Kilbagie distillery, in Clackmannanshire. It was in Burns's day sold so low as one penny per gill, the revenue duty being then small.

AIR.[1]

TUNE—"*For a' that, and a' that.*"

I am a bard of no regard,
  Wi' gentlefolks, and a' that:
But Homer-like, the glowran byke, staring multitude
  Frae town to town I draw that. from

CHORUS.

For a' that, and a' that,
  And twice as muckle's a' that;
I've lost but ane, I've twa behin', one
  I've wife eneugh, for a' that.

I never drank the Muses' stank, pool (or ditch)
  Castalia's burn, and a' that;
But there it streams, and richly reams, creams
  My Helicon I ca' that.
For a' that, &c.

Great love I bear to a' the fair,
  Their humble slave, and a' that,
But lordly will, I hold it still
  A mortal sin to thraw that. thwart
For a' that, &c.

In raptures sweet, this hour we meet,
  Wi' mutual love, and a' that;
But for how long the flee may stang fly sting
  Let inclination law that.
For a' that, &c.

Their tricks and craft hae put me daft, crazy
  They've ta'en me in, and a' that;
But clear your decks, and "Here's the sex!"
  I like the jads for a' that. jades

For a' that, and a' that,
  And twice as muckle's a' that;
My dearest bluid, to do them guid,
  They're welcome till't, for a' that. to it

RECITATIVO.

So sung the bard—and Nansie's wa's
Shook with a thunder of applause,
  Re-echo'd from each mouth;
They toom'd their pocks, and pawn'd their duds, emptied their bags
They scarcely left to co'er their fuds, cover their rumps
  To quench their lowin' drouth. burning thirst

[1] The third, fourth, and fifth stanzes of this song form the second, third, and fourth of song 290 in Johnson's *Museum;* yet we find the editor of that work in a note asserting that the song was *wholly* written for that publication by Burns in 1789, that is, about four years after the verses were composed. It is almost needless to say that Burns wrote another song to this tune, that stirring lyric beginning "Is there for honest poverty," which belongs to a period nearly ten years later than this.

Then owre again, the jovial thrang, over
The poet did request,
To lowse his pack, and wale a sang, unloose select
A ballad o' the best;
He, rising, rejoicing,
Between his twa Deborahs,
Looks round him, and found them
Impatient for the chorus.

AIR.[1]

TUNE—"*Jolly Mortals, fill your Glasses.*"

See the smoking bowl before us!
Mark our jovial ragged ring!
Round and round take up the chorus,
And in raptures let us sing:

CHORUS.

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

What is title? What is treasure?
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!
A fig, &c.

With the ready trick and fable,
Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.
A fig, &c.

Does the train-attended carriage
Thro' the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love?
A fig, &c.

Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum
Who have characters to lose.
A fig, &c.

[1] Burns may have obtained a hint for this song, and even the idea of the whole cantata, from a song called "The Merry Beggars," published in the *Charmer*, two vols., London, 1751. We give two of the stanzas:—

1st Beggar—
I once was a poet at London,
I keep my heart still full of glee;
There's no man can say that I'm undone,
For begging's no new trade to me.

* * * * *

Whoe'er would be merry and free,
Let him list, and from us he may learn;
In palaces who shall you see
Half so happy as us in a barn?

Here's to budgets, bags, and wallets!
Here's to all the wandering train!
Here's our ragged brats and callets!
One and all cry out, Amen!

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.[1]

TRAVELLING TINKER'S SONG.[2]

TUNE—"*Lord Breadalbane's March,*" *or* "*The Bob o' Dunblane.*"

O merry hae I been teethin' a heckle,
And merry hae I been shapin' a spoon;
O merry hae I been cloutin' a kettle,
And kissin' my Katie when a' was done.
O a' the lang day I ca' at my hammer, drive
And a' the lang day I whistle and sing,
A' the lang night I cuddle my kimmer, fondle wench
And a' the lang night am as happy's a king.

[1] "'The Jolly Beggars,' for humorous description, and nice discrimination of character, is inferior to no poem of the same length in the whole range of English poetry. The scene, indeed, is laid in the very lowest department of low life, the actors being a set of strolling vagrants, met to carouse, and barter their rags and plunder for liquor in a hedge ale-house. Yet even in describing the movements of such a group the native taste of the poet has never suffered his pen to slide into anything coarse or disgusting. The extravagant glee, and outrageous frolic of the beggars, are ridiculously contrasted with their maimed limbs, rags, and crutches—the sordid and squalid circumstances of their appearance are judiciously thrown into the shade. Nor is the art of the poet less conspicuous in the individual figures than in the general mass. The festive vagrants are distinguished from each other by personal appearance and character, as much as any fortuitous assembly in the higher orders of life. . . . The most prominent persons are a maimed soldier and his female companion, a hackneyed follower of the camp, a stroller late the consort of a Highland ketteran or sturdy beggar,—'but weary fa' the waefu' woodie!' Being now at liberty, she becomes an object of rivalry between 'a pigmy scraper with his fiddle' and a strolling tinker. The latter, a desperate bandit, like most of his profession, terrifies the musician out of the field, and is preferred by the damsel of course. A wandering ballad-singer with a brace of doxies is last introduced upon the stage. Each of these mendicants sings a song in character, and such a collection of humorous lyrics, connected by vivid poetical description, is not, perhaps, to be paralleled in the English language. . . . We are at a loss to conceive any good reason why Dr. Currie did not introduce this singular and humorous cantata into his collection. It is true, that in one or two passages the muse has trespassed slightly upon decorum, where, in the language of Scottish song,

High kilted was she
As she gaed owre the lea.

Something, however, is to be allowed to the nature of the subject, and something to the education of the poet; and if from veneration to the names of Swift and Dryden, we tolerate the grossness of the one, and the indelicacy of the other, the respect due to that of Burns may surely claim indulgence for a few light strokes of broad humour."—SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Carlyle and others have expressed a similarly high opinion of this Cantata.

"The whole of this admirable cantata has never been in print. Two different songs, connected by a few verses of recitative matter, and which exhibited the character of a chimney-sweep and a sailor, were omitted after the first copy by the author, and seem now to be past recovery."—ROBERT CHAMBERS.

[2] Stenhouse, after stating that he has the original copy of this humorous song in the handwriting of Burns in his hands, adds: "It seems to be a whimsical allusion to his former occupation as a flax-dresser." This is no doubt a mistake. Teething heckles (fixing the fine long metallic teeth of the heckle, a flax-dresser's instrument for combing the fibre to be spun, into their frame), horn-spoon making, and the mending of kettles, &c., were the occupations of the travelling tinker. Probably the verses were meant to form a part of the "Jolly Beggars," but on second thoughts were suppressed in favour of others.

Bitter in dool I lickit my winnins[1] sorrow
O' marrying Bess, to gie her a slave:
Blest be the hour she cool'd in her linens,
And blithe be the bird that sings on her grave.
Come to my arms, my Katie, my Katie,
And come to my arms and kiss me again!
Drunken or sober, here's to thee, Katie!
And blest be the day I did it again.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

INSCRIBED TO R. AIKEN, ESQ.[2]

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short but simple annals of the poor.—GRAY.

My lov'd, my honour'd, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride I scorn each selfish end;
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween.[3]

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh: sough
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh; from plough
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose: crows (rooks)
The toil-worn cotter frae his labour goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end, toil
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend, morrow
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.[4]

[1] This may be rendered, "Bitterly in sorrow I ate what I won in marrying Bess," &c.

[2] Robert Aiken, writer in Ayr, one of the poet's early friends and patrons; as Gilbert Burns calls him, "a man of worth and taste, of warm affections, and connected with a most respectable circle of friends and relations." He was twenty years older than Burns, having been born in 1739; he died in 1807. Besides being a writer or solicitor he was surveyor of taxes, and as such was the recipient of the poet's rhyming "Inventory." He appears in "Holy Willie's Prayer" as "glib-tongu'd Aiken," and is the subject of a special epitaph by the poet. He did much to make Burns's poems known both before and after publication, having as the poet says "read him into fame," and having distributed a large number of copies of the Kilmarnock edition. It was to his son that the "Epistle to a Young Friend" was addressed.

[3] This noble poem was written about the end of 1785; probably the first verse was added afterwards.

The "Cotter's Saturday Night" was no doubt suggested by Fergusson's "Farmer's Ingle," an excellent, but much shorter piece.

[4] "That one single stanza is in itself a picture, one may say a poem, of the poor man's life. It is so imaged on the eye that we absolutely see it; but then not an epithet but shows the condition on which he holds, and the heart with which he endures, and enjoys it. Work he must . . . but God who made the year, shortens and lengthens its days for the sake of his living creatures, and has appointed for them all their hour of rest."—PROFESSOR WILSON.

"Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin' stacher thro'."
—THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

"Th' expectant wee things, toddlin' stacher thro'"

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin', stacher thro' stagger
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise an' glee. fluttering
His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily, fireplace
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary, carking cares[1] beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

Belyve the elder bairns come drappin' in, by-and-by
At service out, amang the farmers roun';
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin drive attentively run
A cannie errand to a neebor town: quiet neighbouring farm
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her ee,
Comes hame, perhaps, to show a braw new gown, fine
Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee, hardly-earned wages
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

Wi' joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers: inquires
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears; strange things
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view.
The mother, wi' her needle an' her sheers, scissors
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new; makes clothes almost
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's an' their mistress's command,
The younkers a' are warnèd to obey;
"An' mind their labours wi' an eydent hand, diligent
An' ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play: dally
An' O! be sure to fear the Lord alway!
An' mind your duty, duly, morn an' night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray, go
Implore his counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!"

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same, knows
Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor, neighbour
To do some errands, and convoy her hame. accompany
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's ee, and flush her cheek:
With heart-struck, anxious care, inquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak; half
Weel pleas'd the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

[1] "Kiaugh [that is, toil or travail] and care," original reading, altered in 1793 to "carking cares," as above.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben; into the room
A strappin' youth; he taks the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye; chats kine
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate and laithfu', scarce can weel behave; bashful and hesitating
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae grave;
Weel pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.[1] other people

O happy love!—where love like this is found!—
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've pacèd much this weary mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare—
"If heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale."[2]

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth,
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth;
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch,[3] chief o' Scotia's food, wholesome porridge
The soupe their only hawkie does afford, drop cow
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood, partition wall
The dame brings forth in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck fell, well-saved cheese pungent
An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.[4] twelvemonth

[1] "Where does the quiet and complacent warmth of parental affection smile with a more gentle benignity than in the figure of the mother in the 'Cotter's Saturday Night?'"—PROFESSOR WALKER.

[2] The germ of this exquisite stanza will be found in the poet's Common-place Book.—"Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young unexperienced mind into, still I think it in a great measure deserves the encomiums that have been passed upon it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection."—COMMON-PLACE BOOK, *April*, 1783.

[3] We fear it is hardly to be called "chief o' Scotia's food" in these days.

[4] This is a very natural touch. The characteristic method of reckoning employed by those engaged in rural occupations is here well exemplified—a year old since flax was in blossom (say about the end of July). Flax was formerly a somewhat important crop in Scotland though it is now hardly to be seen there.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide; fireplace
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible,[1] ance his father's pride: once
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare; gray side-locks
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care; selects
And "Let us worship God!" he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
Perhaps *Dundee's*[2] wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name;
Or noble *Elgin* beets the heav'nward flame, feeds with fuel
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.[3]

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,[4]
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or, Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head:
How his first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd by Heaven's command.

[1] A large edition of the Bible, such as lay in the hall or principal room of houses.

[2] *Dundee, Martyrs, Elgin*, the names of psalm-tunes then popular in Scotland.

[3] "We do not find fault with Burns for having written these [last three] lines; for association of feeling with feeling, by contrast, is perhaps most of all powerful in music. Believing that there was no devotional spirit in Italian music, it was natural for him to denounce its employment in religious services; but we all know that it cannot without most ignorant violation of the truth be said of the hymns of that most musical of all people, that 'Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.'"—PROFESSOR WILSON.

[4] The priest-like father was Burns's own father. Burns had often remarked to his brother Gilbert that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, "Let us worship God," used by a decent sober head of a family introducing family worship; and to this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for the "Cotter's Saturday Night." In his letter to Dr. Currie Gilbert Burns says that the "cotter" was an exact copy of his father in his manners, his family-devotion, and exhortations.

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:[1]
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"[2]
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!
The Power, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul;
And in his book of life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest;
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to heaven the warm request,
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,[3]
"An honest man's the noblest work of God:"
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp?—a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd![4]

[1] "The affectionate reverence with which William Burnes's children ever regarded him, is attested by all who have described him as he appeared in his domestic circle; but there needs no evidence beside that of the poet himself, who has painted in colours that will never fade, 'the saint, the father, and the husband' of the 'Cotter's Saturday Night.'"—LOCKHART.

[2] See! from the brake the whirring pheasant springs,
And mounts exulting on triumphant wings.
Pope's "Windsor Forest."

[3] Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made.
Goldsmith's "Deserted Village."

[4] "Our moral nature revolts with a sense of injustice from the comparison of the wickedness of one class with the goodness of another; and the effect is the very opposite of that intended, the rising up of a miserable conviction, that for a while had been laid asleep, that vice and crime are not excluded from cots, but often, alas! are found there in their darkest colours and most portentous forms."—PROF. WILSON.

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil,
Be bless'd with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And, O! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd isle.

O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide
That stream'd thro' Wallace's undaunted heart;[1]
Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God peculiarly Thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert:
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard![2]

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL.

Gilbert Burns gives the winter of 1784 as the date of the composition of this poem, but that his memory had deceived him may be proved by a letter of the poet's to John Richmond, then in Edinburgh, dated Feb. 17th, 1786, in which he says, "I have been very busy with the muses since I saw you, and have composed, among several others, 'The Ordination,' a poem on Mr. M'Kinlay's being called to Kilmarnock; 'Scotch Drink,' a poem; 'The Cotter's Saturday Night,' and 'An Address to the Deil,' &c."—Richmond went to Edinburgh for the purpose of completing his legal studies in the latter part of the preceding year.

O Prince! O Chief of many throned powers,
That led th' embattled seraphim to war.—MILTON.

O thou! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,[3]
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sooty,
Clos'd under hatches,

[1] That stream'd thro' great, unhappy Wallace' heart—

was the reading in the Kilmarnock edition, and also in the first Edinburgh edition; but at the urgent request of Mrs. Dunlop altered, as given in our text, in 1793.

[2] "'The Cotter's Saturday Night' is a noble and pathetic picture of human manners, mingled with a fine religious awe. It comes over the mind like a slow and solemn strain of music. The soul of the poet aspires from this scene of low-thoughted care, and reposes on 'the bosom of its Father and its God.'"—HAZLITT.

"'The Cotter's Saturday Night' is, perhaps, of all Burns's pieces the one whose exclusion from the collection, were such things possible nowadays, would be the most injurious, if not to the genius, at least to the character of the man. In spite of many feeble lines, and some heavy stanzas, it appears to me, that even his genius would suffer more in estimation by being contemplated in the absence of this poem than of any other single performance he has left us. Loftier flights he certainly has made, but in these he remained but a short while on the wing, and effort is too often perceptible; here the motion is easy, gentle, placidly undulating. There is more of the conscious security of power than in any other of his serious pieces of considerable length; the whole has the appearance of coming in a full stream from the fountain of the heart—a stream that soothes the ear, and has no glare on the surface."—LOCKHART.

[3] The reference is to the *cloots*, or hoofs, with which the popular imagination invested Satan.

Spairges about the brunstane cootie, sprinkles brimstone tub
To scaud poor wretches! scald

Hear me, auld Hangie,[1] for a wee, a little
An' let poor damnèd bodies be; bodies = creatures
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
E'en to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me, beat and scald
An' hear us squeel!

Great is thy power, an' great thy fame;
Far kenn'd and noted is thy name; known
An' tho' yon lowin' heugh's thy hame, flaming pit
Thou travels far;
An', faith! thou's neither lag nor lame,
Nor blate nor scaur. bashful frightened

Whyles, ranging like a roarin' lion, sometimes
For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin';
Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin'
Tirling the kirks; unroofing
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin',
Unseen thou lurks.

I've heard my reverend grannie say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or where auld-ruin'd castles, gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way,
Wi' eldritch croon. unearthly moan

When twilight did my grannie summon
To say her prayers, douce, honest woman! serious
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin', beyond the fence
Wi' eerie drone; [humming
Or, rustlin', thro' the boortries comin', elder-trees
Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night, one
The stars shot down wi' sklentin' light, slanting
Wi' you, mysel', I gat a fright,
Ayont the lough; beyond the pond
Ye, like a rash-buss, stood in sight, rush-bush
Wi' waving sugh. hollow sound

The cudgel in my nieve did shake, fist
Each bristl'd hair stood like a stake,

[1] Elsewhere Burns addresses him as

Dweller in yon dungeon dark,
Hangman of creation.

When wi' an eldritch, stour "quaick, quaick" hoarse
Amang the springs,
Awa ye squatter'd, like a drake, fluttered
On whistling wings.

Let warlocks grim, an' wither'd hags,
Tell how wi' you, on ragweed nags,
They skim the muirs, an' dizzy crags,
Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirk-yards renew their leagues,
Owre howkit dead over dug-up

Thence countra wives, wi' toil an' pain,
May plunge an' plunge the kirn in vain; churn
For, O! the yellow treasure's taen
By witching skill;
An' dawtit, twal-pint hawkie's gaen petted twelve-pint cow
As yell's the bill. milkless bull

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord, thaws hoard
An' float the jinglin' icy-boord, -board
Then water-kelpies haunt the foord,
By your direction,
An' 'nighted trav'llers are allur'd
To their destruction.

An' aft your moss-traversing spunkies goblins
Decoy the wight that late an' drunk is:
The bleezin', curst, mischievous monkies blazing
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne'er mair to rise.

When masons' mystic word an' grip
In storms an' tempests raise you up,
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop, must
Or, strange to tell!
The youngest brother ye wad whip would
Aff straught to h–ll!

Lang syne, in Eden's bonnie yard, garden
When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,
An' all the soul of love they shar'd,
The raptur'd hour,
Sweet on the fragrant, flow'ry swaird sward
In shady bower:[1]

[1] This verse originally stood:—

Langsyne in Eden's happy scene,
When strappin' Adam's days were green,
And Eve was like my bonnie Jean,
My dearest part,
A dancin', sweet, young, handsome quean,
Wi' guileless heart.

Then you, ye auld, sneck-drawing dog![1] latch-drawing
Ye came to Paradise incog,
An' play'd on man a cursed brogue, trick
(Black be your fa'!)
An' gied the infant warld a shog, rough shake
'Maist ruin'd a'.[2] almost

D'ye mind that day, when in a bizz, remember bustle
Wi' reekit duds, an' reestit gizz, smoked clothes singed wig
Ye did present your smoutie phiz blackened
'Mang better folk,
An' sklented on the man of Uz cast obliquely
Your spitefu' joke?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
An' brak him out o' house an' hal', holding
While scabs an' botches did him gall,
Wi' bitter claw,
An' lows'd his ill-tongued, wicked scawl, let loose scolding wife
Was warst ava? worst of all

But a' your doings to rehearse,
Your wily snares an' fechtin' fierce, fighting
Sin' that day Michael[3] did you pierce,
Down to this time,
Wad ding a Lallan tongue, or Erse, would overtask Lowland
In prose or rhyme.

An' now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin'
A certain Bardie's rantin', drinkin',
Some luckless hour will send him linkin' tripping
To your black pit;
But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin', dodging
An' cheat you yet.

But, fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'! would
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken— perhaps
Still hae a stake—
I'm wae to think upo' yon den, sorry
Ev'n for your sake![4]

[1] Like a burglar, withdrawing the *sneck* or latch stealthily, so as not to be heard, and so getting into Paradise incog., *i.e.* his proper character not being discovered.

[2] "There are many touches of simple tenderness of delineation in most of the popular and beautiful poems in the collection, especially in the 'Winter Night'—'The Address to his old Mare'—'The Address to the Deil,' &c.; in all of which, though the greater part of the piece be merely ludicrous and picturesque, there are traits of a delicate and tender feeling, indicating that unaffected softness of heart which is always so enchanting. In the humorous 'Address to the Deil,' which we have just mentioned, every Scottish reader must have felt the effect of this relenting nature in the stanzas, beginning 'Lang syne in Eden's bonnie yard'—'Then you, ye auld sneck-drawing dog,' and 'But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben.'"—JEFFREY.

[3] See Milton, book vi.]—R. B.

[4] "Burns indeed lives in sympathy; his soul rushes forth into all the realms of being; nothing that has

SCOTCH DRINK.[1]

Gie him strong drink, until he wink,
That's sinking in despair;
An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,
That's prest wi' grief an' care;
There let him bowse, an' deep carouse,
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
Till he forgets his loves or debts,
An' minds his griefs no more.
SOLOMON'S PROVERBS, XXXI. 6, 7.

Let other poets raise a fracas
'Bout vines an' wines, an' drucken Bacchus, drunken
An' crabbit names an' stories wrack us, torment
An' grate our lug, ear
I sing the juice Scotch bere can mak us, barley
In glass or jug.

O thou, my Muse! guid auld Scotch Drink!
Whether thro' wimplin' worms thou jink,[2] steal (or dodge)
Or, richly brown, ream o'er the brink, cream
In glorious faem, foam
Inspire me, till I lisp an' wink,
To sing thy name!

Let husky wheat the haughs adorn, holms
An' aits set up their awnie horn, oats
An' pease and beans, at e'en or morn,
Perfume the plain,
Leeze me on thee, John Barleycorn, commend me to thee
Thou king o' grain!

On thee aft Scotland chows her cood, chews cud
In souple scones, the wale o' food![3] flexible cakes choice
Or tumblin' in the boiling flood
Wi' kail an' beef:[4]
But when thou pours thy strong heart's blood,[5]
There thou shines chief.

existence can be indifferent to him. The very devil he cannot hate with right orthodoxy! He did not know probably that Sterne had been beforehand with him. 'He is the father of curses and lies,' said Dr. Slop; 'and is cursed and damned already.' 'I am sorry for it,' quoth my uncle Toby! A poet without love were a physical and metaphysical impossibility." —CARLYLE.——It is tolerably certain that Burns did know that Sterne "had been beforehand with him," and that the sentiment so characteristic of the gentle and humane uncle Toby was consciously or unconsciously borrowed by Burns. The poet's letters clearly enough evidence his familiarity with and admiration of Sterne, and in his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore he expressly says that two or three years before this time *Tristram Shandy* was a "bosom favourite' with him.

[1] "Notwithstanding the praise he has bestowed on 'Scotch Drink'—which seems to have misled his historians—I do not recollect during these seven years [the Tarbolton period], nor till towards the end of his commencing author—when his growing celebrity occasioned his being often in company—to have ever seen him intoxicated, nor was he at all given to drinking."—GILBERT BURNS to DR. CURRIE.

[2] Alluding to whisky, which has to come through the spirally-coiled worm of the still.

[3] The poet here alludes to cakes made of barley-meal, which are baked so thin as to be quite flexible.

[4] In Scotland, hulled barley is uniformly used along with kail or colewort in making broth or soup.

[5] That is, when brewed or distilled.

Food fills the wame, an' keeps us livin'; belly
Tho' life's a gift no worth receivin',
When heavy-dragg'd[1] wi' pine an' grievin'; pain
But, oil'd by thee,
The wheels o' life gae down-hill, scrievin'; gliding swiftly
Wi' rattlin' glee.

Thou clears the head o' doited Lear; stupefied learning
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair sore
At's weary toil;
Thou even brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

Aft, clad in massy siller weed, silver
Wi' gentles thou erects thy head;[2]
Yet humbly kind in time o' need,
The poor man's wine,
His wee drap parritch, or his bread, drop porridge
Thou kitchens fine.[3] givest relish to

Thou art the life o' public haunts:
But thee, what were our fairs and rants! without thee revels
Even godly meetings o' the saunts, saints
By thee inspir'd,
When gaping they besiege the tents,[4]
Are doubly fir'd.

That merry night we get the corn in,[5]
O sweetly then thou reams the horn in! creams
Or reekin' on a New-year mornin'
In cog or bicker, wooden drinking vessels
An' just a wee drap sp'ritual burn[6] in,
An' gusty sucker! toothsome sugar

When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith, implements
O rare! to see thee fizz an' freath froth
I' th' luggit caup! eared bowl
Then Burnewin[7] comes on like death
At every chaup. blow

[1] That is, when pain and grief form a heavy drag upon the wheels.

[2] Ale in silver jugs at the tables of the rich.

[3] When milk is scarce, small beer or other malt liquor is often used as a substitute for it in taking porridge or eating bread. The word *kitchen* in Scotland often means what gives a relish to the commonest fare.

[4] The movable pulpits at celebrations of the communion. See note to the "Holy Fair."

[5] Referring to the harvest-home, when the last of the corn-crop is brought home.

[6] A small quantity of whisky burnt in a spoon, and mixed with the ale.

[7] *Burnewin—burn-the-wind*—the Blacksmith—an appropriate title.—CURRIE.

Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel; iron
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel, bony fellow
Brings hard owre hip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer, sledge-hammer
Till block an' studdie ring an' reel stithy
Wi' dinsome clamour.

When skirlin' weanies see the light, screaming infants
Thou maks the gossips clatter bright, chatter
How fumblin' cuifs their dearies slight; boobies
Wae worth the name!
Nae howdie gets a social night, midwife
Or plack frae them. copper from

When neebours anger at a plea, neighbours get angry
An' just as wud as wud can be, mad
How easy can the barley-bree barley-juice
Cement the quarrel!
It's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee
To taste the barrel.

Alake! that e'er my Muse has reason
To wyte her countrymen wi' treason! blame
But monie daily weet their weason wet throat
Wi' liquors nice,
An' hardly, in a winter's season,
E'er spier her price. ask

Wae worth that brandy, burning trash!
Fell source o' monie a pain an' brash sudden illness
'Twins monie a poor, doylt, drucken hash, bereaves stupid drunken
O' half his days; [simpleton
An' sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash
To her warst faes. worst foes

Ye Scots, wha wish auld Scotland well,
Ye chief, to you my tale I tell,
Poor plackless devils like mysel', penniless
It sets you ill,
Wi' bitter, dearthfu' wines to mell, high-priced meddle
Or foreign gill.

May gravels round his blether wrench, bladder
An' gouts torment him inch by inch,
Wha twists his gruntle wi' a glunch face frown
O' sour disdain,
Out owre a glass o' whisky punch over
Wi' honest men.

O Whisky! saul o' plays an' pranks! soul
Accept a Bardie's gratefu' thanks!

When wanting thee, what tuneless cranks
Are my poor verses!
Thou comes—they rattle i' their ranks
At ither's a—s!

Thee, Ferintosh![1] O sadly lost!
Scotland, lament frae coast to coast! from
Now colic grips an' barkin' hoast cough
May kill us a';
For royal Forbes' charter'd boast
Is ta'en awa!

Thae curst horse-leeches o' th' Excise, those
Wha mak the whisky stells their prize!
Haud up thy han', Deil! ance, twice, thrice! hold
There, seize the blinkers!
An' bake them up in brunstane pies brimstone
For poor d—n'd drinkers.

Fortune! if thou'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a scone, and whisky gill, whole breeches cake
An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will, abundance
Tak a' the rest,
An' deal't about as thy blind skill
Directs thee best.[2]

THE AULD FARMER'S NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION TO HIS AULD MARE MAGGIE,

ON GIVING HER THE ACCUSTOMED RIPP OF CORN TO HANSEL IN THE NEW YEAR [1786].[3]

A guid New-year I wish thee, Maggie!
Hae, there's a ripp to thy auld baggie: handful of corn in the stalk bag (stomach)
Tho' thou's howe-backit now, an' knaggie, hollow-backed with bones protruding
I've seen the day,
Thou could hae gaen like ony staggie stag
Out-owre the lay. away over lea

[1] Forbes of Culloden had the privilege of distilling whisky, *free of duty*, on his barony of Ferintosh in Cromarty, for public services done by the family. So much whisky was there distilled that Ferintosh became a name almost synonymous with whisky. By the act relating to Scotch distilleries in 1785, the privilege was abolished, but Mr. Forbes received in compensation, by a decision of a jury, the sum of £21,580.

[2] "Of his pieces of humour, the tale of 'Tam o' Shanter' is probably the best: though there are traits of infinite merit in 'Scotch Drink,' 'The Holy Fair,' 'Hallowe'en,' and several of the songs, in all of which it is remarkable that he rises occasionally into a strain of beautiful description or lofty sentiment, far above the pitch of his original conception."—JEFFREY. "Scotch Drink" seems to have been suggested by Fergusson's "Cauler (that is fresh and cool) Water," and it is in the same measure.

[3] "It was the token of a true knight in chivalry to be kind to his charger; the Kyle farmer shares in the same feeling, for he is gentle both in word and deed to his 'Auld Mare.' He recollects when she bore him triumphantly home when mellow from markets and other meetings; how she ploughed the stiffest land, and faced the steepest brae, and, moreover, brought home his bonnie bride."—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

Tho' now thou's dowie, stiff, an' crazy, dull
An' thy auld hide's as white's a daisy,
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek, and glaizie, shining
A bonnie gray;
He should been tight that daur't to raize thee, excite
Ance in a day. Once on a time

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,
A filly buirdly, steeve, and swank, large-sized strong active
An' set weel down a shapely shank,
As e'er tread yird; earth
An' could hae flown out-owre a stank, ditch
Like ony bird.

It's now some nine an' twenty year,
Sin' thou was my guid-father's mere; father-in-law's mare
He gied me thee, o' tocher clear, dowry
An' fifty mark;
Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear, wealth
An' thou was stark. strong

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny,
Ye then was trottin' wi' your minnie: mother
Tho' ye was trickie, slee, an' funnie,
Ye ne'er was donsie; restive
But hamely, tawie,[1] quiet, an' cannie, manageable steady
An' unco sonsie. singularly engaging

That day, ye pranc'd wi' muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonnie bride; bore
An' sweet, an' gracefu' she did ride,
Wi' maiden air!
Kyle Stewart[2] I could braggèd wide, challenged
For sic a pair. such

Tho' now ye dow but hoyte an' hobble, can but amble crazily
An' wintle like a saumont-coble, reel salmon-boat
That day ye was a jinker noble, active beast
For heels an' win'!
An' ran them till they a' did wauble, stagger
Far, far behin'.

When thou an' I were young an' skeigh, high-mettled
An' stable-meals at fairs were dreigh, lingering
How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skreigh neigh
An' tak the road!
Town's-bodies ran, and stood abeigh, townsfolk aloof
An' ca't thee mad.

[1] That allows itself peaceably to be handled, *spoken of a horse, cow, &c.—Burns's Glossary.*

[2] The district in Ayrshire situated between the Ayr and the Doon. See note to "There was a lad."

When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow, — fed with corn (oats)
We took the road aye like a swallow;
At brooses[1] thou had ne'er a fellow, — races at weddings
For pith an' speed;
But ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow, — beat
Where'er thou gaed.

The sma', droop-rumpl't, hunter cattle, — drooping-rumped
Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle; — perhaps have distanced thee for a spurt
But sax Scotch miles[2] thou try't their mettle,
An' gar't them whaizle: — made them wheeze (pant)
Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle — switch
O' sauch or hazel. — willow

Thou was a noble fittie-lan',[3] — near hind horse at the plough
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn! — hide or rope
Aft thee an' I, in aught hours gaun, — going
In guid March weather,
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han',
For days thegither. — together

Thou never braindg't, an' fetch't, an' fliskit,[4] — drew unsteadily and inter-
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whiskit, — [mittingly, and fretted
An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket, — broadly breast
Wi' pith an' power, — [roared and cracked
Till spritty[5] knowes wad rair't and risket, — Till rushy hillocks would have
An' slypet owre. — and fallen over

When frosts lay lang, an' snaws were deep,
An' threaten'd labour back to keep,
I gied thy cog a wee bit heap — wooden dish
Aboon the timmer; — above timber (brim)
I kenn'd my Maggie wad na sleep — knew
For that, or simmer.[6] — ere

In cart or car thou never reestit; — refused to move
The steyest brae thou wad hae fac't it: — steepest slope
Thou never lap, and sten't, and breastit, — leaped, reared, and sprang forward
Then stood to blaw; — recover breath
But just thy step a wee thing hastit,
Thou snoov't awa. — went steadily on

[1] Races at country weddings, the object being to see who shall first reach the bridegroom's house on returning from church, or from the bride's former residence after the ceremony.

[2] Nearly seven English miles.

[3] In Burns's time the plough was drawn usually by four horses (not as now by two), and the "fittie-lan'" (foot-on-land, that is on the soil not yet turned up), or "lan'-ahin" (that is, land-behind) was the near or left-hand horse of the hinder pair. The others were the "lan'-afore", the "fur-ahin" (furrow-behind) and the "fur-afore." Besides the ploughman, a *gaudsman* (goadsman) was required to drive. Cf. "The Inventory."

[4] According to Burns's own glossary, *braindge*, or *brainge*, is "to run rashly forward;" *fetch*, "to pull by fits;" *flisk*, "to fret at the yoke."

[5] The *sprit*, *sprat*, or *sprot* is a variety of rush (*Juncus articulatus*). To *risk*, is to make a noise like the tearing of roots.

[6] That is, she would not have much sleep, would have plenty of hard work, ere summer, in return for getting that extra quantity of oats now.

My pleugh is now thy bairn-time a':[1] plough (team) offspring
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw:
Forbye sax mae, I've sell't awa, besides six more
That thou hast nurst:
They drew me thretteen pund an' twa, thirteen pounds
The vera warst.

Monie a sair daurk we twa hae wrought, sore day's work
An' wi' the weary warl' fought!
An' monie an anxious day, I thought
We wad be beat!
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
Wi' something yet.

And think na, my auld trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou's less deservin'
An' thy auld days may end in starvin',
For my last fou, measure
A heapit stimpart, I'll reserve ane gallon measure
Laid by for you.

We've worn to crazy years thegither; together
We'll toyte about wi' ane anither; totter
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether, thoughtful shift
To some hain'd rig, reserved ridge
Whare ye may nobly rax your leather, stretch
Wi' sma' fatigue.[2]

THE TWA DOGS.—A Tale.

The "Twa Dogs" was completed in February, 1786, as appears from a letter of Burns to Richmond, dated the 17th of that month, in which he says: "I have likewise completed my poem on the 'Dogs,' but have not shown it to the world." His brother gives us the following information: "The tale of 'Twa Dogs' was composed after the resolution of publishing was nearly taken. Robert had a dog, which he called Luath, that was a great favourite. The dog had been killed by the wanton cruelty of some person the night before my father's death. Robert said to me that he should like to confer such immortality as he could bestow on his old friend Luath, and that he had a great mind to introduce something into the book [the first edition of his poems] under the title of *Stanzas to the Memory of a Quadruped Friend;* but this plan was given up for the poem as it now stands. Cæsar was merely the creature of the poet's imagination, created for the purpose of holding a chat with his favourite Luath."—Gilbert Burns.

'Twas in that place o' Scotland's isle,
That bears the name o' Auld King Coil,[3]
Upon a bonnie day in June,
When wearing thro' the afternoon,

[1] My plough-team now consists entirely of thy offspring. *Bairn-time* is the same as Old English *barnteme*, A. Saxon *bearn-téam*, from *bearn*, child, and *téam*, family, progeny.

[2] "Towards the close of his Address he grows serious, but not sad—as well he may; and at the close, as well he may, tender and grateful. . . . The Address has—we know—humanized the heart of a Gilmerton carter."—Professor Wilson.

[3] Kyle, the central district of Ayrshire, popularly

Twa dogs, that were na thrang at hame, busy
Forgather'd ance upon a time. met together

The first I'll name, they ca'd him Cæsar,
Was keepit for his honour's pleasure:
His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs, ears
Show'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs;
But whalpit some place far abroad, whelped
Whare sailors gang to fish for cod.

His lockèd, letter'd, braw brass collar fine
Show'd him the gentleman and scholar;[1]
But though he was o' high degree,
The fient[2] a pride, nae pride had he; deuce
But wad hae spent an hour caressin', would have
Ev'n wi' a tinkler-gypsy's messin. tinker mongrel cur
At kirk or market, mill or smiddie, smithy
Nae tawted tyke, tho' e'er sae duddie, matted cur ragged
But he wad stan't, as glad to see him, would have stood
And stroan't on stanes an' hillocks wi' him.

The tither was a ploughman's collie, other
A rhyming, ranting, raving billie, rollicking fellow
Wha for his friend an' comrade had him,
And in his freaks had Luath ca'd him,
After some dog in Highland sang,[3]
Was made lang syne—Lord knows how lang.

He was a gash an' faithfu' tyke, sagacious
As ever lap a sheugh or dyke. leaped a ditch or solid fence
His honest, sonsie, baws'nt[4] face, comely striped
Aye gat him friends in ilka place. always got every
His breast was white, his towzie back shaggy
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
His gawcie tail, wi' upward curl, large
Hung o'er his hurdies wi' a swirl. hips

Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither, fond of each other
An' unco pack an' thick thegither; extremely intimate
Wi' social nose whyles snuff'd and snowkit, sometimes smelt
Whyles mice an' moudieworts they howkit; moles dug up
Whyles scour'd awa' in lang excursion,
An' worry'd ither in diversion; each other

supposed to have derived its name from Coilus, said in legend to have been a king of the Picts. The portion of Kyle north of the Ayr is distinguished as King's Kyle, or Kyle Stewart, having been at one time in the possession of that family.

[1] "The burlesque panegyric of the first dog reminds one of Launce's account of his dog Crab, where he is said, as an instance of his being in the way of promotion, 'to have got among three or four gentleman-like dogs under the duke's table.'"—HAZLITT.

[2] Corruption of *fiend:* therefore, a petty oath = the devil a pride.

[3] Cuchullin's dog in Ossian's Fingal.—R. B.

[4] Having a white stripe down the face.

Until wi' daffin weary grown, sporting
Upon a knowe they sat them down, knoll
And there began a lang digression
About the lords o' the creation.[1]

CÆSAR.

I've often wonder'd, honest Luath,
What sort o' life poor dogs like you have;
An' when the gentry's life I saw,
What way poor bodies liv'd ava. at all

Our laird gets in his rackèd rents, proprietor
His coals, his kain,[2] and a' his stents: rent in kind assessments
He rises when he likes himsel';
His flunkies answer at the bell;
He ca's his coach, he ca's his horse; calls for
He draws a bonnie silken purse
As lang's my tail, whare, thro' the steeks, meshes (lit. stitches)
The yellow letter'd Geordie keeks. golden guinea peeps

Frae morn to e'en it's nought but toiling,
At baking, roasting, frying, boiling;
An' tho' the gentry first are stechin', cramming
Yet ev'n the ha' folk fill their pechan kitchen-people belly
Wi' sauce, ragouts, and siclike trashtrie, suchlike stuff
That's little short o' downright wastrie.
Our whipper-in, wee blastit wonner,[3] wonder
Poor worthless elf, it eats a dinner,
Better than ony tenant man
His honour has in a' the lan':
An' what poor cot-folk pit their painch in, cottars put stomach
I own it's past my comprehension.

LUATH.

Trowth, Cæsar, whyles they're fash't eneugh; In truth sometimes
A cottar howkin' in a sheugh, digging in a ditch [perplexed
Wi' dirty stanes biggin' a dyke, building a fence
Baring a quarry, and sic like, such
Himsel', a wife, he thus sustains,
A smytrie o' wee duddie weans, swarm of ragged children
An' nought but his han' darg, to keep day's labour
Them right and tight in thack an' rape.[4] thatch and rope

[1] "In one of his earlier poems his plan seems to be to inculcate a lesson of contentment on the lower classes of society, by showing that their superiors are neither much better nor happier than themselves; and this he chooses to execute in the form of a dialogue between two dogs. . . . The dogs of Burns, excepting in their talents for moralizing, are downright dogs; and not like the horses of Swift, or the hind and panther of Dryden, men in the shape of brutes."—DR. CURRIE.

[2] Fowls, &c., paid as rent by a farmer.—BURNS.

[3] *Wonner* or *wonder* is often used in Scotland as a term of great contempt for a small and insignificant person.

[4] In a comfortable home, the thatch properly secured with straw-rope.

An' when they meet wi' sair disasters, sore
Like loss o' health, or want o' masters,
Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer, almost would
An' they maun starve o' cauld an' hunger: must
But, how it comes, I never kent yet, knew
They're maistly wonderfu' contented; mostly
An' buirdly chiels, an' clever hizzies, stalwart fellows young women
Are bred in sic a way as this is. such

CÆSAR.

But then to see how ye're negleckit,
How huff'd, and cuff'd, and disrespeckit
L—d, man, our gentry care as little
For delvers, ditchers, an' sic cattle; such
They gang as saucy by poor folk,
As I wad by a stinking brock. badger

I've notic'd on our laird's court-day, landlord's rent-day
An' mony a time my heart's been wae, woeful
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole a factor's snash; must endure abuse
He'll stamp, an' threaten, curse an' swear,
He'll apprehend them, poind their gear; distrain goods
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble, must stand
An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble![1]

I see how folk live that hae riches;
But surely poor folk maun be wretches?

LUATH.

They're no sae wretched's ane wad think: one would
Tho' constantly on poortith's brink, poverty's
They're sae accustom'd wi' the sight,
The view o't gies them little fright.

Then chance an' fortune are sae guided,
They're aye in less or mair provided,
An' tho' fatigu'd wi' close employment,
A blink o' rest's a sweet enjoyment. short period

The dearest comfort o' their lives,
Their grushie weans an' faithfu' wives, thriving children
The prattling things are just their pride,
That sweetens a' their fire-side.

An' whyles twalpennie worth o' nappy[2] sometimes ale
Can mak' the bodies unco happy; uncommonly

[1] This description is from dire personal experience. "My indignation yet boils at the recollection of (what we suffered at Mount Oliphant, from) the scoundrel factor's insolent letters, which used to set us all in tears."—BURNS'S *Autobiographical Letter to Dr. Moore.*

[2] Twalpennies Scots is equal to one penny sterling —the then price of a choppin (quart) of Scotch ale.

They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs:
They'll talk o' patronage and priests,
Wi' kindling fury in their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation's comin',
An' ferlie at the folk in Lon'on. marvel

As bleak-fac'd Hallowmass returns,
They get the jovial, ranting kirns, rollicking harvest-homes
When rural life, o' ev'ry station,
Unite in common recreation;
Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth
Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.

That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty win's;
The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream, cream
An' sheds a heart-inspiring steam;
The luntin' pipe, an' sneeshin-mill, smoking snuff-box
Are handed round wi' richt guid will;
The cantie auld folks crackin' crouse, cheerful talking gleefully
The young anes rantin' thro' the house,— frolicking
My heart has been sae fain to see them, pleased
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.[1]

Still it's owre true that ye hae said,
Sic game is now owre aften play'd;
There's monie a creditable stock,
O' decent, honest, fawsont folk, seemly
Are riven out baith root and branch, torn
Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,
Wha thinks to knit himsel' the faster
In favour wi' some gentle master,
Wha, aiblins, thrang a-parliamentin', perhaps, busy
For Britain's guid his saul indentin'—

CÆSAR.

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it; Faith know
For Britain's guid! guid faith! I doubt it!
Say rather, gaun as premiers lead him, going
An' saying ay or no's they bid him:
At operas an' plays parading,
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading;
Or maybe, in a frolic daft, foolish
To Hague or Calais takes a waft, trip
To make a tour, an' tak' a whirl,
To learn bon ton, an' see the worl'.

[1] "He carries us into the humble scenes of life, not to make us dole out our tribute of charitable compassion to paupers and cottagers, but to make us feel with them on equal terms, to make us enter into their passions and interests, and share our hearts with them as with brothers and sisters of the human species."—THOMAS CAMPBELL.

There, at Vienna or Versailles,
He rives his father's auld entails; tears
Or by Madrid he takes the rout,
To thrum guitars, and fecht wi' nowt;[1] fight cattle
Or down Italian vista startles,
Wh-re-hunting among groves o' myrtles:
Then bowses drumly German water, turbid
To mak' himsel' look fair and fatter,
An' clear the consequential sorrows,
Love-gifts of carnival signoras.

For Britain's guid!—for her destruction!
Wi' dissipation, feud, an' faction.

LUATH.

Hech man! dear Sirs! is that the gate way
They waste sae mony a braw estate! fine
Are we sae foughten an' harass'd so troubled
For gear to gang that gate at last! money way

O would they stay aback frae courts, away from
An' please themsels wi' kintra sports, country
It wad for ev'ry ane be better,
The laird, the tenant, an' the cotter!
For thae frank, rantin', ramblin' billies, those rollicking fellows
Fient haet[2] o' them's ill-hearted fellows; deuce a bit
Except for breakin' o' their timmer, timber
Or speakin' lightly o' their limmer, wench
Or shootin' o' a hare or moor-cock, grouse
The ne'er a bit they're ill to poor folk.[3]

But will ye tell me, Master Cæsar,
Sure great folk's life's a life o' pleasure?
Nae cauld nor hunger e'er can steer them, annoy (stir)
The vera thought o't need na fear them.

CÆSAR.

L—d, man, were ye but whyles whare I am, sometimes
The gentles ye wad ne'er envý 'em.

It's true they need na starve or sweat,
Thro' winter's cauld, or simmer's heat;
They've nae sair wark to craze their banes, no hard work
An' fill auld age wi' grips an' granes; groans

[1] An allusion to the bull-fights of Spain.

[2] *Fient haet* (i.e. *fiend have it*), and *deil haet* farther on, are petty oaths expressing negation, equivalent to the English *deuce* or *devil a bit*.

[3] "When describing with satirical humour the character of country squires, he remarks that they are in general disposed to treat their rustic dependants with affable liberality and indulgence, and that there are but a few unpardonable offences which never fail to kindle their resentment, and call forth their powers of oppression. These he catches with penetrating observation, and enumerates with happy brevity, in six lines, of which the descriptive truth will be recognized from Caithness to Cornwall."—PROFESSOR WALKER.

But human bodies are sic fools, creatures such
For a' their colleges and schools,
That when nae real ills perplex them,
They make enow themselves to vex them;
An' aye the less they hae to sturt them, molest
In like proportion less will hurt them.

A country fellow at the pleugh,
His acres till'd, he's right eneugh;
A country girl at her wheel,
Her dizzens done, she's unco weel: dozens very well
But gentlemen, an' ladies warst,
Wi' ev'ndown want o' wark are curst. downright
They loiter, lounging, lank, an' lazy;
Tho' deil haet ails them, yet uneasy; deuce a thing
Their days, insipid, dull, and tasteless;
Their nights unquiet, lang and restless.

An' e'en their sports, their balls an' races,
Their galloping thro' public places,
There's sic parade, sic pomp, an' art, such
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.

The men cast out in party matches, quarrel
Then sowther a' in deep debauches; solder
Ae night they're mad wi' drink an' wh-ring, one
Niest day their life is past enduring. next

The ladies arm-in-arm in clusters,
As great and gracious a' as sisters;
But hear their absent thoughts o' ither, each other
They're a' run deils an' jads thegither.[1] together
Whyles o'er the wee bit cup an' platie, sometimes
They sip the scandal potion pretty;
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbit leuks live-long looks
Pore owre the devil's pictur'd beuks; books
Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard,
An' cheat like onie unhang'd blackguard.

There's some exception, man an' woman;
But this is gentry's life in common.

By this the sun was out o' sight,
An' darker gloaming brought the night:

[1] All regular devils and jades together.

——They are the happiest who dissemble best
Their weariness, and they the most polite
Who squander time and treasure with a smile,
Even at their own destruction. She that asks
Her dear five hundred friends, contemns them all,
And hates their coming. They—what can they less?—
Make just reprisals, and with cringe and shrug,
With bow obsequious, hide their hate of her.—Cowper.

The bum-clock humm'd wi' lazy drone; beetle
The kye stood rowtin' i' the loan; kine lowing lane
When up they gat, and shook their lugs, got ears
Rejoic'd they were na *men*, but *dogs;*
An' each took aff his several way,
Resolv'd to meet some ither day.[1]

THE AUTHOR'S EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER TO THE SCOTCH REPRESENTATIVES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

This was written before the act anent the Scotch distilleries, of session 1786; for which Scotland and the Author return their most grateful thanks.—BURNS.

Dearest of distillation! last and best!
How art thou lost! PARODY ON MILTON.[2]

Ye Irish lords,[3] ye knights an' squires,
Wha represent our brughs an' shires, burghs
An' doucely manage our affairs soberly
In parliament,
To you a simple Bardie's prayers
Are humbly sent.

Alas! my roopit muse is hearse! rough-voiced hoarse
Your honours' hearts wi' grief 't wad pierce, would
To see her sittin' on her ——
Low i' the dust,
An' scriechin' out prosaic verse, screeching
An' like to brust!

Tell them wha hae the chief direction,
Scotland an' me's in great affliction,
E'er sin' they laid that curst restriction
On aquavitæ;[4]

[1] "Though I am very far from meaning to compare our rustic bard to Shakespeare, yet whoever will read his lighter and more humorous poems, his Dialogue of the Dogs, his Dedication to Gavin Hamilton, Esq., his Epistles to a Young Friend, and to W. Simson, will perceive with what uncommon penetration and sagacity this heaven-taught ploughman, from his humble and unlettered station, has looked upon men and manners."—HENRY MACKENZIE.

[2] The lines parodied (not very happily) are in Paradise Lost, book ix., the words being used by Adam in regard to Eve after she had eaten the forbidden fruit:

O fairest of creation, last and best
Of all God's works! . . . .
How art thou lost!

[3] The Almanacs of the period give the names of several Irish peers among the representatives of the "brughs an' shires" of Scotland, these peers being probably connected by blood or marriage with the great Scotch families who held the patronage of many of the seats in North Britain. It is somewhat anomalous that while "Irish lords" that have not a seat in the House of Peers are eligible for a seat in the House of Commons (for constituencies in Great Britain), the same privilege is not enjoyed by peers of Scotland. This disability Burns probably regarded as a national insult.

[4] In the end of 1785 there was a great outcry among the distillers of Scotland against the laws to which their industry was subject, and they were supported

An' rouse them up to strong conviction,
An' move their pity.

Stand forth, an' tell yon Premier Youth,[1]
The honest, open, naked truth:
Tell him o' mine an' Scotland's drouth,
His servants humble:
The muckle devil blaw ye south,
If ye dissemble!

Does ony great man glunch an' gloom? frown
Speak out, an' never fash your thumb! trouble
Let posts an' pensions sink or soom swim
Wi' them wha grant 'em,
If honestly they canna come,
Far better want 'em.

In gath'rin' votes you were na slack;
Now stand as tightly by your tack; lease
Ne'er claw your lug, an' fidge your back, scratch ear shrug
An' hum an' haw,
But raise your arm, an' tell your crack tale
Before them a'.

Paint Scotland greeting owre her thrissle; weeping thistle
Her mutchkin-stoup as toom's a whistle; pint-pot empty
An' damn'd excisemen in a bustle,
Seizin' a stell, still
Triumphant crushin't like a mussel
Or lampit shell. limpet

Then on the tither hand present her, other
A blackguard smuggler right behint her,
An' cheek-for-chow, a chuffie vinter, cheek-by-jowl
Colleaguing join,
Picking her pouch as bare as winter
Of a' kind coin.

Is there, that bears the name o' Scot,
But feels his heart's bluid rising hot,
To see his poor auld mither's pot
Thus dung in staves, knocked
An' plunder'd o' her hindmost groat
By gallows knaves?

by the farmers and land-owners, these latter classes resting their case chiefly on the fact that the excise laws injuriously affected the sale of barley by reducing its price. It was alleged that many distillers were, in consequence of the existing laws or the excessively rigorous manner in which they were carried out, forced to give up their business; while illicit distillation and smuggling of spirits from abroad were greatly on the increase, and had come to a pitch never known before. The agitation led to new excise regulations being introduced in 1786 (as Burns intimates in his note given above) which seem to have been considered quite satisfactory by the persons chiefly concerned.

[1] Mr. Pitt. Though only about twenty-seven years of age he was then premier.

Alas! I'm but a nameless wight,
Trod i' the mire out o' sight!
But could I like Montgom'ries[1] fight,
Or gab like Boswell,
There's some sark-necks I wad draw tight, shirt-
An' tie some hose well.

God bless your honours, can ye see't,
The kind, auld, cantie carlin greet, cheerful old wife weep
An' no get warmly to your feet,
An' gar them hear it, make
An' tell them, wi' a patriot heat,
Ye winna bear it!

Some o' you nicely ken the laws, know
To round the period an' pause,
An' wi' rhetoric clause on clause
To mak harangues;
Then echo thro' Saint Stephen's wa's
Auld Scotland's wrangs.

Dempster,[2] a true blue Scot, I'se warran';
Thee, aith-detesting, chaste Kilkerran;[3] oath-
An' that glib-gabbet Highland baron, ready-tongued
The Laird o' Graham,[4]
An' ane, a chap that's d-mn'd auldfarran', wily
Dundas his name.[5]

Erskine,[6] a spunkie Norland billie; mettlesome fellow
True Campbells, Frederick an' Ilay;[7]
An' Livi'stone, the bauld Sir Willie;[8]
An' monie ithers, many others
Whom auld Demosthenes or Tully
Might own for brithers.[9]

[1] The Montgomeries of Coilsfield. The "Boswell" mentioned along with the Montgomeries, was the well-known biographer of Johnson, who often spoke at Ayr county-meetings. It is singular that this enthusiastic literary gossip should have overlooked Burns.

[2] George Dempster of Dunnichen, in Forfarshire, a distinguished Whig representative. See note to the "Epistle to James Smith."

[3] Sir Adam Ferguson of Kilkerran, Bart., then member for the city of Edinburgh.

[4] The Marquis of Graham, afterwards Duke of Montrose. He died in 1836.

[5] Henry Dundas, M.P. for Edinburghshire, afterwards Viscount Melville.

[6] Probably Thomas Erskine, afterwards Lord High Chancellor of England, born 1750, died 1823. But he was not then in parliament.

[7] Lord Frederick Campbell, M.P. for Argyleshire, second brother of the Duke of Argyle; and Ilay Campbell, M.P. for the Glasgow group of burghs. He was afterwards president of the Court of Session, and died in 1823.

[8] Sir William Augustus Cunningham, Bart. of Livingston, sometime M.P. for Linlithgowshire.

[9] In the original MS. the following stanza occurs here:—

See, sodger Hugh, my watchman stented,
If bardies e'er are represented;
I ken that if your sword was wanted,
Ye'd lend your hand;
But when there's aught to say anent it,
Ye're at a stand.

"Sodger Hugh," says Currie, "is evidently the Earl of Eglinton, then Colonel Montgomery of Coilsfield, representing in parliament the county of Ayr. Why this was left out does not appear." The explanation given is that as there is here a reference to the

Arouse, my boys! exert your mettle,
To get auld Scotland back her kettle;
Or faith! I'll wad my new pleugh-pettle, pledge plough-staff
Ye'll see't, or lang, ere
She'll teach you, wi' a reekin' whittle, knife
Anither sang.

This while she's been in crankous mood, for some time irritable
Her lost militia fir'd her bluid;[1]
(Deil na they never mair do guid,
Play'd her that pliskie!) trick
An' now she's like to rin red-wud run stark mad
About her whisky.

An' L—d, if ance they pit her till't, put her to it
Her tartan petticoat she'll kilt, truss up
An' durk an' pistol at her belt,
She'll tak the streets,
An' rin her whittle to the hilt, run her knife
I' th' first she meets!

For G–d sake, sirs! then speak her fair,
An' straik her cannie wi' the hair, stroke her gently
An' to the muckle house repair,
Wi' instant speed,
An' strive, wi' a' your wit and lear, learning
To get remead.

Yon ill-tongued tinkler, Charlie Fox, tinker
May taunt you wi' his jeers an' mocks;
But gie him't het, my hearty cocks! hot
E'en cowe the cadie; frighten the fellow
An' send him to his dicing box
An' sportin' lady.

Tell yon guid bluid o' auld Boconnock's[2]
I'll be his debt twa mashlum bannocks,[3] cakes of mixed grain
An' drink his health in auld Nanse Tinnock's[4]
Nine times a-week.

defective oratorical faculty of the gallant member, Burns suppressed it to avoid giving offence.

[1] The Scots Militia Bill, introduced into parliament in 1782, had inserted in it on the third reading a clause for facilitating enlistment into the army from the force contemplated to be raised. Dempster and other Liberal members, objecting to this condition, opposed the bill and it was lost.

[2] Pitt's father, the Earl of Chatham, was the second son of Robert Pitt of Boconnock, in Cornwall.

[3] *Mashlum* = mixed. Mashlum bannocks, cakes made of a mixture of oats, peas, and beans, with wheat or barley ground fine.

[4] A worthy old hostess of the author's in Mauchline, where he sometimes studied politics over a glass of guid auld Scotch drink.—R. B.

"Nanse Tinnock is long deceased, and no one has caught up her mantle. She is described as having been a true ale-wife in the proverbial sense of the word—close, discreet, civil, and no tale-teller. When any neighbouring wife came asking if *her John* was here, 'Oh, no!' Nanse would reply, shaking money in her pocket as she spoke, 'he's no here;' implying to the querist that her husband was not in the house, while she meant to herself that he was not among her halfpence—thus keeping the word of promise to the

If he some scheme, like tea an' winnocks,[1] windows
Wad kindly seek.

Could he some commutation broach,
I'll pledge my aith in guid braid Scotch, oath
He needna fear their foul reproach
Nor erudition,
Yon mixtie-maxtie queer hotch-potch, confusedly mixed
The Coalition.[2]

Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue; rough and fearless
She's just a devil wi' a rung; cudgel
An' if she promise auld or young
To tak their part,
Tho' by the neck she should be strung,
She'll no desert.

An' now, ye chosen Five-and-Forty,[3]
May still your mither's heart support ye;
Then, tho' a minister grow dorty, saucy
An' kick your place,
Ye'll snap your fingers, poor an' hearty,
Before his face.

God bless your honours a' your days,
Wi' sowps o' kail and brats o' claise, drops of broth rags of clothes
In spite o' a' the thievish kaes, jackdaws
That haunt St. Jamie's![4]
Your humble Bardie sings an' prays
While Rab his name is.

POSTSCRIPT.

Let half-starv'd slaves, in warmer skies,
See future wines, rich clust'ring, rise;
Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,
But, blythe and frisky,
She eyes her freeborn, martial boys
Tak aff their whisky.

What tho' their Phœbus kinder warms,
While fragrance blooms and beauty charms,

ear, but breaking it to the hope. . . . It is remembered, however, that Nanse never could understand how the poet should have talked of enjoying himself in her house 'nine times a week.' 'The lad,' she said, 'hardly ever drank three half-mutchkins in her house in his life.' Nanse, probably, had never heard of the poetical license."—ROBERT CHAMBERS.

Nanse, in speaking thus, was perhaps only supporting the character here given her, of a discreet ale-wife and no "tale-teller."

[1] Alluding to a reduction of the duty on tea, and a tax on windows, introduced by Pitt in 1784.

[2] The short-lived coalition ministry under the Duke of Portland, in which it was attempted to effect the Utopian scheme of combining the leading men of both parties—materials the most discordant—into one vigorous and united administration.

[3] The number of Scottish representatives in the House of Commons previous to the passing of the Reform Act of 1832.

[4] The court of St. James's.

When wretches range, in famish'd swarms,
The scented groves,
Or hounded forth, dishonour arms
In hungry droves.

Their gun's a burden on their shouther; shoulder
They downa bide the stink o' powther; cannot stand
Their bauldest thought's a hank'ring swither uncertainty
To stan' or rin, run
Till skelp—a shot—they're aff, a' throw'ther, bang!–pell-mell
To save their skin.

But bring a Scotsman frae his hill, from
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
Say, such is royal George's will,
An' there's the foe,
He has nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow.

Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him;
Death comes, wi' fearless eye he sees him;
Wi' bluidy hand a welcome gies him:
An' when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathin' lea'es him
In faint huzzas.[1]

Sages their solemn een may steek, shut
An' raise a philosophic reek, smoke
And physically causes seek,
In clime and season;
But tell me whisky's name in Greek,
I'll tell the reason.

Scotland, my auld, respected mither!
Tho' whiles ye moistify your leather,
Till whare ye sit, on craps o' heather, tops
Ye tine your dam; lose
Freedom and whisky gang thegither! go together
Tak aff your dram.

1 "There are specimens of such vigour and emphasis scattered through his whole works, as are sure to make themselves and their author remembered; for instance, that noble description of a dying soldier, "Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him."—JEFFREY.

THE ORDINATION.[1]

In a letter of the poet's to his intimate friend John Richmond, Edinburgh, dated 17th February, 1786, he says: "I have been very busy with the Muses since I saw you, and have composed, among several others, the 'Ordination,' a poem on Mr. M'Kinlay's being called to Kilmarnock."

For sense they little owe to frugal Heaven.—
To please the mob they hide the little given.

Kilmarnock wabsters fidge an' claw, — weavers shrug — scratch
An' pour your creeshie nations; — greasy
An' ye wha leather rax an' draw, — stretch
Of a' denominations,[2]
Swith! to the Laigh Kirk, ane an' a', — off!
An' there tak up your stations:
Then aff to Begbie's in a raw,[3] — row
An' pour divine libations
For joy this day.

Curst Common Sense, that imp o' hell,
Cam in wi' Maggie Lauder;[4]
But Oliphant aft made her yell,
An' Russell sair misca'd her;[5] — sorely abused
This day Mackinlay taks the flail,
An' he's the boy will blaud her! — slap
He'll clap a shangan on her tail, — cleft stick
An' set the bairns to daud her — bespatter
Wi' dirt this day.

Mak haste an' turn king David owre, — over
An' lilt wi' holy clangor; — sing
O' double verse come gie us four, — give
An' skirl up the Bangor;[6] — screech

[1] The "Ordination," as proved by Burns's own statement regarding its composition, must have been written about, or a little before, the beginning of February, 1786, when it became known that the Rev. Mr. Mackinlay was to be ordained minister of the Laigh (that is Low) or parochial Church of Kilmarnock, which took place on the 6th of April, 1786. Mackinlay died so recently as the 10th of February, 1841, having held the church in Kilmarnock about fifty-five years, and survived the poet about forty-five. He belonged to the high Orthodox or Old Light party, in opposition to the Moderates or New Lights, to which Burns attached himself: and as he succeeded a Moderate (the Rev. Mr. Mutrie) the severe irony of the satire may be accounted for. Other poems in which the severely orthodox party are ridiculed by Burns are the "Twa Herds," the "Holy Fair," and the "Kirk's Alarm."

[2] The inhabitants of Kilmarnock were then chiefly employed in weaving carpets and other goods, and in the preparation of leather.

[3] A tavern in Kilmarnock, near the Laigh Kirk, kept by a person of this name.

[4] Alluding to a scoffing ballad which was made on the admission of the late Reverend and worthy Mr. Lindsay to the Laigh Kirk.]—R. B.——This ballad, which is mere doggerel, was written by an eccentric shoemaker named Hunter, and is given at p. 144 of the *History of Kilmarnock*, by Archibald M'Kay.

Mr. Lindsay was said to have obtained his appointment through the influence of his wife, Margaret Lauder, who had been housekeeper to the Earl of Glencairn, the patron of the church. Lindsay was a Moderate, or adopted what was then called the Common Sense doctrines. His induction had to be effected by force. He died in 1774, and was succeeded by the Rev. John Mutrie, who died in June, 1785. Mackinlay obtained the presentation to the Low Church from the Earl of Glencairn in the same year, through the influence of Sir W. Cunningham of Auchenskeith, in whose family he had for some time been tutor.

[5] Oliphant and Russell were Kilmarnock ministers of the Old Light party.

[6] A favourite psalm tune.

This day the kirk kicks up a stoure, dust
Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her, no more
For Heresy is in her power,
An' gloriously she'll whang her flog
Wi' pith this day.

Come, let a proper text be read,
An' touch it aff wi' vigour,
How graceless Ham[1] leugh at his dad, laughed
Which made Canaan a nigger;
Or Phineas[2] drove the murdering blade,
Wi' wh-re-abhorring rigour:
Or Zipporah,[3] the scauldin' jade, scolding
Was like a bluidy tiger
I' th' inn that day.

There, try his mettle on the creed,
And bind him down wi' caution,
That stipend is a carnal weed
He taks but for the fashion;
An' gie him o'er the flock, to feed,
And punish each transgression;
Especial, rams that cross the breed,
Gie them sufficient threshin',
Spare them nae day.

Now, auld Kilmarnock, cock thy tail,
And toss thy horns fu' canty; merry
Nae mair thou'lt rowte out-owre the dale, low
Because thy pasture's scanty;
For lapfu's large o' gospel kail
Shall fill thy crib in plenty,
An' runts o' grace the pick an' wale, colewort stems choice
No gi'en by way o' dainty,
But ilka day.[4] every

Nae mair by Babel's streams we'll weep,
To think upon our Zion;
And hing our fiddles up to sleep, hang
Like baby-clouts a-dryin':
Come, screw the pegs wi' tunefu' cheep,
And o'er the thairms be tryin'; catgut strings

[1] Genesis ix. ver. 22.—R. B.

[2] Numbers xxv. ver. 8.—R. B.

[3] Exodus iv. ver. 25.—R. B.

[4] "The conceptions of Burns were no less remarkable for their clearness than their strength. This enabled him to sustain all the similes correctly, and to avoid that incongruity in the progress of the parallel to which less discriminating minds are exposed. We may refer, as examples, to the ludicrous comparisons of Kilmarnock to a cow in the 'Ordination,' and of the life of the 'Unco Guid' to a mill, in the 'Address,' and also to the whole allegorical song 'John Barleycorn.'"—PROFESSOR WALKER.

Oh, rare! to see our elbucks wheep, elbows jerk
An' a' like lamb-tails flyin'
Fu' fast this day!

Lang Patronage, wi' rod o' airn, iron
Has shor'd the Kirk's undoin', threatened
As lately Fenwick,[1] sair forfairn, sorely jaded
Has proven to its ruin:
Our patron, honest man! Glencairn,
He saw mischief was brewin';
And like a godly elect bairn,
He's wal'd us out a true ane, picked
And sound this day.

Now Robertson[2] harangue nae mair,
But steek your gab for ever: shut your mouth
Or try the wicked town o' Ayr,
For there they'll think you clever;
Or, nae reflection on your lear, learning
Ye may commence a shaver;
Or to the Netherton[3] repair,
And turn a carpet-weaver
Aff-hand this day.

Mutrie and you were just a match,
We never had sic twa drones; such two
Auld Hornie did the Laigh Kirk watch,
Just like a winkin' baudrons; cat
And aye he catch'd the tither wretch, other
To fry them in his caudrons; cauldrons
But now his honour maun detach, must
Wi' a' his brimstone squadrons,
Fast, fast this day.

See, see auld Orthodoxy's faes foes
She's swingein' thro' the city:
Hark, how the nine-tail'd cat she plays!
I vow it's unco pretty; extremely
There, Learning, with his Greekish face,
Grunts out some Latin ditty;
And Common Sense is gaun, she says, going
To mak to Jamie Beattie[4]
Her 'plaint this day.

But there's Morality himsel',
Embracing all opinions;

[1] A parish in Ayrshire.
[2] The colleague of Mackinlay—a Moderate; died 1798.
[3] A suburb of Kilmarnock.
[4] Probably James Beattie, LL.D., the poet and philosopher, author of an *Essay on Truth*, as it was supposed he sided with the "Moderates" in church matters.

Hear, how he gies the tither yell, other
Between his twa companions;
See, how she peels the skin an' fell, the flesh under the skin
As ane were peelin' onions!
Now there—they're packèd aff to hell,
And banish'd our dominions,
Henceforth this day.

O happy day! rejoice, rejoice!
Come bouse about the porter!
Morality's demure decoys
Shall here nae mair find quarter: no more
Mackinlay, Russell, are the boys,
That Heresy can torture;
They'll gie her on a rape a hoyse, rope hoist
And cowe her measure shorter cut
By th' head some day.

Come, bring the tither mutchkin in, other pint
And here's for a conclusion,
To every New Light mother's son,
From this time forth, Confusion:
If mair they deave us with their din, deafen
Or Patronage intrusion,
We'll light a spunk, and, ev'ry skin, match
We'll rin them aff in fusion run
Like oil, some day.[1]

EPISTLE TO JAMES SMITH.[2]

Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul!
Sweet'ner of life, and solder of society!
I owe thee much.—Blair.

Dear Smith, the sleest, pawkie thief, sliest, knowing
That e'er attempted stealth or rief, robbery
Ye surely hae some warlock-breef wizard's spell
Owre human hearts;
For ne'er a bosom yet was prief proof
Against your arts.

[1] "This poem on the clerical settlements at Kilmarnock, blends a good deal of ingenious metaphor with his accustomed humour. Even viewing him as a satirist, the last and humblest light on which he can be regarded as a poet, it may still be said of him,

His style was witty, though it had some gall:
Something he might have mended—so may all."

Thomas Campbell.

[2] James Smith, to whom this epistle is addressed, and who is therein described as of "scrimpit stature," but of sterling manhood, was originally a shopkeeper in Mauchline. He removed to the banks of the Avon, in the neighbourhood of Linlithgow, where he established a calico-printing establishment. Becoming unfortunate in his speculations, he afterwards went to the West Indies, and found an early grave. He is said to have been of rather rakish habits, as, indeed, is hinted in the "Epitaph" following. The epistle was written in the spring of 1786.

"The epistle to Smith is, perhaps, the very best of

For me, I swear by sun an' moon,
And ev'ry star that blinks aboon, twinkles above
Ye've cost me twenty pair o' shoon
Just gaun to see you; going
And ev'ry ither pair that's done, other
Mair ta'en I'm wi' you.

That auld, capricious carlin, Nature, beldame
To mak amends for scrimpit stature, defective
She's turn'd you aff, a human creature
On her first plan,
And in her freaks, on ev'ry feature,
She's wrote, the Man.

Just now I've ta'en the fit o' rhyme,
My barmie noddle's working prime, yeasty
My fancy yerkit up sublime lashed
Wi' hasty summon:
Hae ye a leisure-moment's time
To hear what's comin'?

Some rhyme, a neebor's name to lash; neighbour's
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash;
Some rhyme to court the countra clash, gossip
An' raise a din;
For me, an aim I never fash;— care for
I rhyme for fun.

The star that rules my luckless lot,
Has fated me the russet coat,
An' damn'd my fortune to the groat;
But, in requit,
Has bless'd me wi' a random shot
O' countra wit.

This while my notion's ta'en a sklent, for some time turn
To try my fate in guid black prent;[1]
But still the mair I'm that way bent,
Something cries, "Hoolie! softly
I red you, honest man, tak tent! warn care
Ye'll shaw your folly. show

"There's ither poets, much your betters,
Far seen in Greek, deep men o' letters,
Hae thought they had ensur'd their debtors
A' future ages;

all these compositions [the epistles]: the singular ease of the verse—the moral dignity of one passage—the wit and humour of a second—the elegance of compliment in a third—and the life which animates the whole, must be felt by the most ordinary mind. The verse "when ance life's day draws near the gloamin," was frequent on the lips of Byron during the darkening frown of his own day."—ALLAN CUNNINGHAME.

[1] An allusion to the first edition of his poems, which was passing through the press at the time this epistle was written, and was published in the end of July, 1786.

Now moths deform in shapeless tatters,
Their unknown pages."

Then fareweel hopes o' laurel-boughs,
To garland my poetic brows!
Henceforth I'll rove where busy ploughs
Are whistling thrang, busily
An' teach the lanely heights an' howes hollows
My rustic sang.

I'll wander on with tentless heed careless
How never-halting moments speed,
Till fate shall snap the brittle thread;
Then, all unknown,
I'll lay me with the inglorious dead,
Forgot and gone!

But why o' death begin a tale?
Just now we're living, sound and hale;
Then top and maintop crowd the sail,
Heave care o'er side!
And large, before enjoyment's gale,
Let's tak the tide.

This life, sae far's I understand,
Is a' enchanted, fairy-land,
Where pleasure is the magic wand,
That, wielded right,
Maks hours, like minutes, hand in hand,
Dance by fu' light.

The magic-wand then let us wield;
For, ance that five-an'-forty's speel'd, surmounted
See crazy, weary, joyless eild, age
Wi' wrinkl'd face,
Comes hostin', hirplin', owre the field, coughing, limping
Wi' creepin' pace.

When ance life's day draws near the gloamin', twilight
Then fareweel vacant careless roamin';
An' fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin',
An' social noise;
An' fareweel, dear, deluding woman,
The joy of joys!

O Life! how pleasant in thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning,
Cold-pausing Caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys, at th' expected warning,
To joy and play.

We wander there, we wander here,
We eye the rose upon the brier,
Unmindful that the thorn is near,
Among the leaves;
And though the puny wound appear,
Short while it grieves.

Some, lucky, find a flowery spot,
For which they never toiled or swat; sweated
They drink the sweet, and eat the fat,
But care or pain; without
And, haply, eye the barren hut
With high disdain.

With steady aim, some fortune chase;
Keen hope does every sinew brace;
Thro' fair, thro' foul, they urge the race,
And seize the prey:
Then cannie, in some cozie place, quietly snug
They close the day.

And others, like your humble servan',
Poor wights! nae rules nor roads observin';
To right or left, eternal swervin',
They zig-zag on:
Till curst with age, obscure an' starvin'
They aften groan.[1]

Alas! what bitter toil an' straining—
But truce with peevish, poor complaining!
Is fortune's fickle Luna waning?
E'en let her gang!
Beneath what light she has remaining,
Let's sing our sang.

My pen I here fling to the door,
And kneel, "Ye Powers!" and warm implore,
"Tho' I should wander Terra o'er,
In all her climes,
Grant me but this, I ask no more,
Aye rowth o' rhymes. abundance

"Gie dreeping roasts to countra lairds, dripping squires
Till icicles hing frae their beards; hang from
Gie fine braw claes to fine life-guards, showy clothes
And maids of honour;
And yill an' whisky gie to cairds, ale tinkers
Until they sconner. are nauseated

[1] "Where can we find a more exhilarating enumeration of the enjoyments of youth, contrasted with their successive extinction as age advances, than in the 'Epistle to James Smith?'"—PROFESSOR WALKER.

"A title, Dempster[1] merits it;
A garter gie to Willie Pitt;
Gie wealth to some be-ledger'd cit,
In cent. per cent.,
But gie me real, sterling wit,
And I'm content.

"While ye are pleas'd to keep me hale,
I'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
Be't water-brose, or muslin-kail,[2] soup-maigre
Wi' cheerfu' face,
As lang's the muses dinna fail do not
To say the grace."

An anxious ee I never throws eye
Behint my lug, or by my nose; ear
I jouk beneath misfortune's blows duck
As weel's I may:
Sworn foe to sorrow, care, and prose,
I rhyme away.

O ye douce folk, that live by rule, sober
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm and cool,
Compar'd wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!
How much unlike!
Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives, a dyke! wall

Nae hair-brain'd, sentimental traces[3]
In your unletter'd, nameless faces!
In arioso trills and graces
Ye never stray,
But, gravissimo, solemn basses
Ye hum away.

Ye are sae grave, nae doubt ye're wise;
Nae ferly tho' ye do despise no wonder
The harum-scarum, ram-stam boys, thoughtless
The rattlin' squad:
I see you upwards cast your eyes—
—Ye ken the road.—

[1] George Dempster of Dunnichen, Forfarshire, M.P., a distinguished parliamentary orator, and an intrepid defender of all Scottish patriotic institutions: died in 1818, aged eighty-two: réferred to in the "Author's Cry."

[2] Water-brose is made by stirring boiling water and oat-meal together so as to form a thickish mess which is eaten with milk. It used to be a very common dish with the labouring classes of Scotland. Muslin-kail is a broth composed of water, hulled barley, and greens, without meat, and is so named probably from its thinness or want of substance.

[3] This line is quoted by Burns himself in his poem of the "Vision:"

A "hair-brain'd, sentimental trace"
Was strongly markèd in her face.

Whilst I—but I shall haud me there— hold
Wi' you I'll scarce gang ony where—
Then, Jamie, I shall say nae mair,
But quat my sang, quit
Content wi' you to mak a pair,
Whare'er I gang.[1]

EPITAPH ON A WAG IN MAUCHLINE.[2]

Lament him, Mauchline husbands a',
He often did assist ye;
For had ye staid whole weeks awa',
Your wives they ne'er had miss'd ye.
Ye Mauchline bairns, as on ye pass
To school in bands thegither,
O tread ye lightly on his grass,
Perhaps he was your father.

EPITAPH ON JOHN DOVE,[3]

INNKEEPER, MAUCHLINE.

Here lies Johny Pigeon; what was his religion
Whae'er desires to ken,
To some other warl' maun follow the carl,
For here Johny Pigeon had nane.

Strong ale was ablution, small beer persecution,
A dram was *memento mori;*
But a full flowing bowl was the saving his soul,
And Port was celestial glory.

[1] "The bounding sense of enjoyment expressed in this poem is in striking contrast to the sombre tones of "Man was made to Mourn," and the verses "To a Mouse." . . . There was, indeed, at this time a contention going on in Burns's mind, between the sad consideration of his position in life, and those poetical tendencies which might be interpreted as partly the cause of that position being so low. . . . At length we have the final struggle between these two contending principles, and the triumph of the muse, expressed in a poem of the highest strain of eloquence."—ROBERT CHAMBERS.

[2] This "wag" was James Smith, to whom Burns addressed the above poetical epistle. His claims to distinction, as a village notoriety, might have with propriety been left unsung.

[3] The landlord of the "Whitefoord Arms," Mauchline, in the main street opposite the parish church, and closely adjoining the house in which Jean Armour's parents resided. It was Burns's "howff" in the days preceding the publication of the Kilmarnock edition of his poems, and the headquarters of a bachelors' club, of which the poet, John Richmond, James Smith, and William Hunter were "the bright particular stars." Its object was to discuss and expiscate village scandals, and its proceedings were assimilated to those of a court of justice. Smith, the "wag" of the preceding epitaph, acted as "fiscal."

THE VISION.

DUAN FIRST.[1]

The sun had clos'd the winter day,
The curlers quat their roaring play,[2] quitted
An' hunger'd maukin ta'en her way hare
To kail-yards green, cabbage-gardens
While faithless snaws ilk step betray each
Whare she has been.

The thresher's weary flingin'-tree flail
The lee-lang day had tired me; live-long
And when the day had clos'd his ee, eye
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence, right pensivelie, within the parlour
I gaed to rest. went

There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek, fireside
I sat and ey'd the spewing reek, smoke
That fill'd, wi' hoast-provoking smeek, cough- smoke
The auld clay biggin;[3] building
An' heard the restless rattons squeak rats
About the riggin. roof

All in this mottie, misty clime, full of motes
I backward mus'd on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done nae-thing,
But stringin' blethers up in rhyme, nonsense
For fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harket,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank an' clarket written up ('clerked')
My cash account:
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarket, -shirted
Is a' th' amount.

[1] *Duan*, a term of Ossian's for the different divisions of a digressive poem. See his "Cath-Loda," vol. ii. of M'Pherson's translation.—R. B.

[2] *Curling*, a winter amusement on the ice, in which contending parties slide large smooth stones of a circular form, with a handle on the upper side, from one mark to another, called the tee. The chief object of the player is to hurl his stone along the ice towards the tee with proper strength and precision; and on the skill displayed by the players in placing their own stones in favourable positions, or in driving rival stones out of favourable positions, depends the chief interest of the game. Curling is well called a *roaring play* (the "roaring game" indeed is its ordinary colloquial designation), both from the hilarity of the players and the roaring sound of the stones along the ice. It may be looked upon as a sort of game of bowls played on ice instead of a smooth sward of grass.

[3] The farmhouse of Mossgiel, where the poet was living when he wrote this poem, was not such a hovel as one might suppose from its being here called "an auld clay biggin."

I started, mutt'ring, "Blockhead! coof!" fool
And heav'd on high my waukit loof, work-hardened palm
To swear by a' yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith, oath
That I, henceforth, would be rhyme-proof
Till my last breath—

When, click! the string the snick did draw; latch
And, jee! the door gaed to the wa';
An' by my ingle-lowe I saw, flame of the fire
Now bleezin' bright, blazing
A tight, outlandish hizzie, braw, young woman finely dressed
Come full in sight.

Ye need na doubt, I held my whisht; kept silent
The infant aith, half-form'd, was crusht;
I glowr'd as eerie's I'd been dusht stared scared prostrated
In some wild glen;
When sweet, like modest worth, she blusht,
And steppèd ben. into the room

Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs
Were twisted, gracefu', round her brows;
I took her for some Scottish Muse,
By that same token;
An' come to stop those reckless vows,
Would soon been broken.

A "hair-brain'd, sentimental trace,"[1]
Was strongly markèd in her face;
A wildly-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, ev'n turn'd on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honour.

Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen; barely
And such a leg! my bonnie Jean[2]
Could only peer it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight, and clean, so straight
Nane else came near it.

Her mantle large, of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;

[1] A quotation from himself—from the "Epistle to James Smith," the piece immediately preceding this.

[2] Kilmarnock (original) edition:—

And such a leg! my Bess, I ween.

In the original MS. the line was as in the text; but while his poems were at the press Burns's irritation at Jean Armour's conduct in connection with the destruction of the marriage lines he had given her caused him to obliterate her name, and substitute for it that of "the Cynthia of the minute." The indignant feeling having subsided, and Jean being once more in favour, her name was restored in the Edinburgh edition.

Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling threw
A lustre grand;
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,
A well known land.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were tost;
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast,
With surging foam;
There, distant shone art's lofty boast,
The lordly dome.

Here, Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;
There, well-fed Irwine stately thuds:
Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods, stole
On to the shore;
And many a lesser torrent scuds,
With seeming roar.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient borough rear'd her head;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race,
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.[1]

By stately tow'r or palace fair,
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With feature stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race[2] heroic wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dy'd steel
In sturdy blows;
While back-recoiling seem'd to reel
Their Suthron foes.

His Country's Saviour,[3] mark him well!
Bold Richardton's[4] heroic swell;

[1] The remaining seven stanzas of Duan First were added in the Edinburgh edition, from motives of policy, to please Mrs. Dunlop and other influential Ayrshire patrons. But they formed part of the first draft, together with a good many more, descriptive of the mantle of Coila, which were entirely suppressed by the author. In fact the suppressed stanzas are weak, and conspicuously below the Burns level. Writing to Mrs. Dunlop on 15th January, 1787, in reference to the seven stanzas introduced in the Edinburgh edition, he says:—"I have not composed anything on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print and the enclosed, which I will print in this edition. When I composed my *Vision* long ago, I had attempted a description of Kyle, of which these stanzas are a part as it originally stood."

[2] The Wallaces.—R. B.

[3] Sir William Wallace.—R. B.

[4] Adam Wallace, of Richardton, cousin to the immortal preserver of Scottish independence.—R. B.

The chief on Sark[1] who glorious fell,
In high command;
And he whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a scepter'd Pictish shade,[2]
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,
I mark'd a martial race, portray'd
In colours strong;
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd
They strode along.[3]

Thro' many a wild, romantic grove,
Near many a hermit-fancy'd cove,
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love)
In musing mood,
An aged judge, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.[4]

With deep-struck reverential awe
The learned sire and son[5] I saw;
To nature's God and nature's law
They gave their lore;
This, all its source and end to draw;
That, to adore.

[1] Wallace, Laird of Craigie, who was second in command, under Douglas Earl of Ormond, at the famous battle on the banks of Sark, fought anno 1448. That glorious victory was principally owing to the judicious conduct and intrepid valour of the gallant Laird of Craigie, who died of his wounds after the action.—R. B. Mrs. Dunlop was a descendant.

[2] Coilus, King of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family-seat of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, where his burial-place is still shown. —R. B.——The mound popularly understood to contain the remains of old King Coil was opened in May, 1837, when it was satisfactorily ascertained to have been a place of sepulture of no ordinary description. —*Paterson's History of the Counties of Ayr and Wigton*, vol. i. p. 759.

[3] The Montgomeries of Coilsfield.

[4] Barskimming, and its proprietor, Thomas Miller, lord justice clerk, were here in the poet's eye, and the compliment was merited by both. The lands and mansion of Barskimming occupy a more than usually romantic portion of the banks of the Ayr, between the villages of Tarbolton and Mauchline, and must have been much under the notice of Burns when he resided at Lochlea and Mossgiel. The river here steals its way through a long profound chasm in the New Red Sandstone of the district, the sides of which are in many places as perpendicular as walls, but, in every spot where vegetation is possible, clothed with the most luxuriant wood. A bridge stretches from the one bank to the other, at a dizzy height above the furtive and scarce seen stream, giving access to the mansion, which is situated on a height immediately above. In the precipices beneath the house there are some artificial caves (hence the expression "many a hermit-fancy'd cove"), accessible in the course of the pleasure walks connected with the mansion. Lord Justice Clerk Miller was born in 1717. Entering at the bar in 1742, he rose through a series of offices to that of supreme criminal judge, which he held from 1766 till January, 1788; when he succeeded Sir Robert Dundas as president of the Court of Session, and attained the dignity of a baronet. His life was unexpectedly cut short, in the ensuing September, when he died, after an illness of two days, at his seat of Barskimming; "leaving," says his biographer, Mr. David (afterwards Baron) Hume, "no good man his enemy, and attended with that sincere and extensive regret which only those can hope for who have occupied the like important stations, and acquitted themselves as well."

[5] Catrine, the seat of Professor Dugald Stewart. —R. B.——Dr. Matthew Stewart, the mathematician and professor in Edinburgh University, and his son Dugald Stewart, the metaphysician and professor in the same university, are here meant. Burns became acquainted with Professor Dugald Stewart in the latter part of 1786 after the publication of the Kilmarnock edition of his poems, and was a visitor at the mansion of Catrine, which was three or four miles from Mossgiel.

Brydone's brave ward[1] I well could spy,
Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye;
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot name on high,
And hero shone.

DUAN SECOND.

With musing-deep, astonish'd stare,
I view'd the heavenly-seeming fair;
A whispering throb did witness bear,
Of kindred sweet,
When with an elder sister's air
She did me greet.

"All hail! my own inspirèd bard!
In me thy native muse regard!
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low!
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow.

"Know, the great genius of this land
Has many a light, aërial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

"They Scotia's race among them share;
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart;
Some teach the bard, a darling care,
The tuneful art.

"'Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,
They, ardent, kindling spirits pour;
Or, 'mid the venal senate's roar,
They, sightless, stand,
To mend the honest patriot-lore,
And grace the land.

"And when the bard, or hoary sage,
Charm or instruct the future age,

[1] Colonel Fullarton.—R. B.——This gentleman had travelled, having as his preceptor Patrick Brydone, a native of Berwickshire, author of *A Tour through Sicily and Malta.*

They bind the wild poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.

"Hence Fullarton, the brave and young;
Hence Dempster's[1] zeal-inspirèd[2] tongue;
Hence sweet harmonious Beattie sung
His 'Minstrel lays;'
Or tore, with noble ardour stung,
The sceptic's bays.

"To lower orders are assign'd
The humbler ranks of human-kind,
The rustic bard, the lab'ring hind,
The artisan;
All choose, as various they're inclin'd,
The various man.

"When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threat'ning storm some strongly rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain
With tillage-skill;
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blythe o'er the hill.

"Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some soothe the lab'rer's weary toil,
For humble gains.
And make his cottage-scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

"Some, bounded to a district-space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace
Of rustic bard;
And careful note each op'ning grace,
A guide and guard.

"Of these am I—Coila my name;
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells,[3] chiefs of fame,
Held ruling pow'r:
I mark'd thy embryo tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

[1] George Dempster, of Dunnichen in Forfarshire, highly popular for his patriotic services to his country both as member of parliament and as landed proprietor and agriculturist.

[2] "Truth-prevailing" in the Kilmarnock edition.

[3] The Loudoun branch of the Campbells, to whom much of the land in the neighbourhood of Mossgiel then belonged.

"With future hope, I oft would gaze,
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely caroll'd chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes,
Fir'd at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

"I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the north his fleecy store
Drove thro' the sky,
I saw grim nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

"Or, when the deep green-mantl'd earth
Warm cherish'd ev'ry flow'ret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove,
I saw thee eye the gen'ral mirth
With boundless love.

"When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,
Call'd forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their evening joys,
And lonely stalk
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

"When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adorèd Name,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,
Misled by fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven.[1]

"I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,

[1] "Of strains like the above, solemn and sublime with that rapt and inspired melancholy in which the poet lifts his eye 'above this visible diurnal sphere,' the poems entitled 'Despondency,' 'The Lament,' 'Winter, a Dirge,' and the invocation 'To Ruin,' afford no less striking examples."—HENRY MACKENZIE.——It has been pointed out by more than one critic that light that led astray could hardly be light from heaven.

Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends.
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends.

"Thou canst not learn, nor can I show
To paint with Thomson's landscape-glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

"Yet, all beneath th' unrivall'd rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws
His army shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows
Adown the glade.

"Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And trust me, not Potosi's mine,
Nor king's regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A rustic bard.

"To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;
Preserve the dignity of man,
With soul erect;
And trust the Universal Plan
Will all protect.

"And wear thou this"—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head;
The polish'd leaves, and berries red,
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.

SONG—HERE'S HIS HEALTH IN WATER.[1]

TUNE—"*The Job of Journey-work.*"

Altho' my back be at the wa',
And though he be the fautor; wrong-doer

[1] There is an old song, the burden of which is, "Here's his health in water." Stenhouse says the song was thrown off by Burns in jocular allusion to his own and Jean Armour's awkward predicament before their marriage. We put it here accordingly, though its date is doubtful.

Altho' my back be at the wa',
  Yet here's his health in water!

O! wae gae by his wanton sides, — woe go
  Sae brawlie he could flatter; — finely
Till for his sake I'm slighted sair, — sorely
  And dree the kintra clatter. — suffer — country gossip

But tho' my back be at the wa',
  And tho' he be the fautor, — wrong-doer
But tho' my back be at the wa',
  Yet here's his health in water!

ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID, OR THE RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS.[1]

My son, these maxims make a rule,
  And lump them aye thegither; — always together
The Rigid Righteous is a fool,
  The Rigid Wise anither:
The cleanest corn that e'er was dight — winnowed
  May hae some pyles o' caff in; — pieces of chaff
So ne'er a fellow-creature slight
  For random fits o' daffin'.—Solomon.—Eccles. vii. 16. — frolicsomeness

O ye wha are sae guid yoursel',
  Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
  Your neebour's fauts and folly!
Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill, — well-going
  Supplied wi' store o' water,
The heapèt happer's ebbing still,
  And still the clap plays clatter. — clack

Hear me, ye venerable core, — corps
  As counsel for poor mortals,
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door, — sober
  For glaikit Folly's portals; — thoughtless
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
  Would here propone defences,
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes, — unlucky
  Their failings and mischances.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compar'd,
  And shudder at the niffer, — exchange

[1] This poem appeared in the Edinburgh edition of 1787, whence it may be concluded that it was written after the publication of the Kilmarnock edition in July, 1786. It springs so directly from the heart, embodies so much dear-bought experience, and enforces charitable construction of the conduct of others with such calmness and good sense,—the outcome of a full consciousness on the part of the poet of his own weaknesses and shortcomings,—that had it been written before that date it would most probably have been given to the world then. But the thoughts here embodied were familiar to him, and the germ of the poem may be found in his Common-place Book, under date March, 1784.

But cast a moment's fair regard,
What maks the mighty differ? difference
Discount what scant occasion gave
That purity ye pride in,
And (what's aft mair than a' the lave) often more rest
Your better art o' hiding.

Think, when your castigated pulse
Gies now and then a wallop, bound
What ragings must his veins convulse,
That still eternal gallop:
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
Right on ye scud your sea-way;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail, both
It maks an unco lee-way. very great

See Social Life and Glee sit down,
All joyous and unthinking,
Till, quite transmugrified, they're grown metamorphosed
Debauchery and Drinking:
O, would they stay to calculate
Th' eternal consequences;
Or your more dreaded hell to state,
D–mnation of expenses!

Ye high, exalted, virtuous dames,
Tied up in godly laces,
Before ye gie poor Frailty names,
Suppose a change o' cases;
A dear lov'd lad, convenience snug,
A treacherous inclination—
But, let me whisper i' your lug, ear
Ye're aiblins nae temptation. perhaps

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin'[1] wrang, little
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *Why* they do it:
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us,
He knows each chord—its various tone
Each spring—its various bias:

[1] Literally, as much as enables one to *ken* or know.

Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.[1]

THE INVENTORY.

IN ANSWER TO A MANDATE BY THE SURVEYOR OF TAXES.[2]

Sir, as your mandate did request,
I send you here a faithfu' list
O' gudes an' gear, an' a' my graith, goods and possessions implements
To which I'm clear to gie my aith. oath

Imprimis, then, for carriage cattle,
I hae four brutes o' gallant mettle,
As ever drew afore a pettle. plough-staff
My lan'-afore's[3] a guid auld has-been,
An' wight an' wilfu' a' his days been; strong
My lan'-ahin's[4] a weel-gaun fillie, well-going
That aft has borne me safe frae Killie,[5] from
An' your auld burgh mony a time,
In days when riding was nae crime:—
But ance, when in my wooing pride,
I, like a blockhead, boost to ride, behoved
The wilfu' creature sae I pat to, put
(L—d, pardon a' my sins, and that too!)
I play'd my fillie sic a shavie, such a trick
She's a' bedevil'd with the spavie. spavin
My fur-ahin's[6] a wordy beast, worthy
As e'er in tug or tow was trac'd. hide or rope
The fourth's a Highland Donald hastie,
A d–mn'd red-wud, Kilburnie[7] blastie! stark mad
Forbye a cowt, o' cowts the wale, besides colt pick
As ever ran afore a tail;

[1] "The momentous truth of this passage could not possibly have been conveyed with such pathetic force by any poet that ever lived, speaking in his own voice; unless it were felt that, like Burns, he was a man who preached from the text of his own errors; and whose wisdom, beautiful as a flower that might have risen from seed sown from above, was in fact a scion from the root of personal suffering."—WORDSWORTH.

[2] In 1785, in order to liquidate ten millions of unfunded debt, Mr. Pitt passed a new tax act, among the taxed articles specified in it being male and female servants, riding and carriage horses (ten shillings each), stage-coaches, &c. As tax-surveyor for the district, Mr. Aiken, to whom the "Cotter's Saturday Night" was inscribed, had sent to Burns the usual schedule to be filled up, on receipt of which the poet sent his friend this poetical "Inventory," which is valuable for the information it gives us about the habits and surroundings of the poet at Mossgiel.

[3] The fore-horse on the left hand in the plough. See note to the "Auld Farmer's New-Year Morning Salutation.

[4] The hindmost horse on the left hand.

[5] Kilmarnock.

[6] The hindmost horse on the right hand.

[7] Kilbirnie, in the district of Cunningham, is noted for its horse fairs, considered the largest in the west of Scotland, at one of which the poet had bought "Highland Donald."

Gin he be spar'd to be a beast, if
He'll draw me fifteen pun' at least.—

Wheel carriages I hae but few,
Three carts, an' twa are feckly new; mostly
Ae auld wheel-barrow, mair for token one
Ae leg an' baith the trams are broken; shafts
I made a poker o' the spin'le,
An' my auld mither brunt the trin'le.— wheel

For men, I've three mischievous boys,
Run-deils for rantin' an' for noise; regular devils frolic
A gaudsman[1] ane, a thrasher t'other, goadsman
Wee Davock[2] hauds the nowt in fother. holds cattle fodder
I rule them, as I ought, discreetly,
And aften labour them completely:
An' aye on Sundays duly, nightly
I on the Questions[3] targe them tightly; examine them rigidly
Till, faith, wee Davock's turn'd sae gleg, sharp
Tho' scarcely langer than your leg,
He'll screed you aff Effectual Calling,[4] rattle off
As fast as ony in the dwalling.—

I've nane in female servan' station,
(L—d, keep me aye frae a' temptation!)
I hae nae wife, and that my bliss is,
An' ye have laid nae tax on misses;
An' then, if kirk folks dinna clutch me,
I ken the deevils dare na touch me.
Wi' weans I'm mair than weel contented,
Heav'n sent me ane mair than I wanted,
My sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess,[5] plump
She stares the daddy in her face,
Enough of ought ye like but grace;
But her, my bonie sweet wee lady,
I've paid enough for her already,
An' gin ye tax her or her mither, if
B' the L—d! ye'se get them a' thegither! ye shall

And now, remember, Mr. Aiken,
Nae kind of license out I'm takin':
Thro' dirt and dub for life I'll paidle, puddle trudge
Ere I sae dear pay for a saddle;

[1] *Gaudsman*, from *gaud* = goad, the boy that drives the plough team; so called because when oxen used to be yoked to the plough, the driver carried a goad or prick. As explained elsewhere, the plough in Burns's day was drawn by four horses.

[2] A pet diminutive form of *David*.

[3] The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster divines, on which Scottish youth, especially in the rural districts, used to be severely exercised on the Sunday evenings.

[4] A prominent question and answer in the Shorter Catechism, considered rather difficult to get by heart.

[5] An illegitimate child of the poet's, by a servant girl of his mother's, Elizabeth Paton. See note to the well-known poem commencing, "Thou's welcome, wean," &c.

My travel a' on foot I'll shank it, tramp
I've sturdy bearers, Gude be thankit.
The kirk an' you may tak you that,
It puts but little in your pat; pot
So dinna put me in your buke, do not book
Nor for my ten white shillings luke. look

This list wi' my ain hand I wrote it,
Day an' date as under notit;
Then know all ye whom it concerns,
Subscripsi huic ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, *Feb.* 22, 1786.

TO JOHN KENNEDY,

DUMFRIES HOUSE.[1]

Now, Kennedy, if foot or horse
E'er bring you in by Mauchline corse, market-cross
(Lord, man, there's lassies there wad force
A hermit's fancy;
An' down the gate in faith they're worse, road
An' mair unchancy.) more dangerous

But, as I'm sayin', please step to Dow's,[2]
And taste sic gear as Johnnie brews, such stuff
Till some bit callan bring the news lad
That ye are there;
An' if we dinna hae a bouse, do not have
I'se ne'er drink mair. I shall

It's no I like to sit an' swallow,
Then like a swine to puke and wallow;
But gie me just a true good fellow
Wi' right ingine, originality
An' spunkie ance to mak' us mellow, whisky
An' there we'll shine.

Now if ye're ane o' warl's folk, world's
Wha rate the wearer by the cloak,
And sklent on poverty their joke, direct
Wi' bitter sneer,
Wi' you nae friendship I will troke, exchange
Nor cheap nor dear.

[1] The above lines follow a short note written to Mr. Kennedy (factor or sub-factor to the Earl of Dumfries, Dumfries House, Ayrshire), in reply to a request to be favoured with a perusal of the "Cotter's Saturday Night," a copy of which the poet enclosed with his note.

[2] John Dove, landlord of the Whitefoord Arms Inn, Mauchline, a favourite haunt of the poet's. See p. 144.

But if, as I'm informèd weel,
Ye hate as ill's the vera deil
The flinty heart that canna feel—
Come, sir, here's to you!
Hae, there's my haun, I wiss you weel, hand wish
An' gude be wi' you.

ROBERT BURNESS.

MOSSGIEL, *3d March*, 1786.

TO A LOUSE.

ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH.

Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin' ferlie? where are you going crawl-
Your impudence protects you sairly: greatly [ing wonder
I canna say but ye strunt rarely, strut
Owre gauze and lace;
Tho', faith, I fear ye dine but sparely
On sic a place. such

Ye ugly, creepin', blastit wonner, wonder
Detested, shunn'd by saunt and sinner,
How dare ye set your fit upon her, foot
Sae fine a lady!
Gae somewhere else, and seek your dinner go
On some puir body.

Swith! in some beggar's haffet squattle; off! side-locks hide
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle scramble
Wi' ither kindred, jumpin' cattle,
In shoals and nations;
Whare horn nor bane ne'er daur unsettle small-toothed comb
Your thick plantations.

Now haud ye there, ye're out o' sight, hold
Below the fatt'rils, snug an' tight; ribbon-ends
Na, faith ye yet! ye'll no be right
Till ye've got on it,
The vera tapmost, tow'ring height
O' Miss's bonnet!

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out, bold
As plump and gray as ony grozet; gooseberry
O for some rank, mercurial rozet, rosin
Or fell, red smeddum, powder
I'd gie you sic a hearty doze o't, such
Wad dress your droddum! breech

I wad na been surpris'd to spy — would not
You on an auld wife's flannen toy;[1] — cap
Or aiblins some bit duddie boy, — perhaps ragged
On's wyliecoat; — flannel vest
But Miss's fine Lunardi![2] fie,
How dare ye do't!

O Jenny, dinna toss your head,
An' set your beauties a' abread! — abroad
Ye little ken what cursèd speed
The blastie's makin'! — blasted creature
Thae winks and finger-ends, I dread, — those
Are notice takin'!

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us — would from
And foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us, — leave
And ev'n devotion![3]

TO MR. M'ADAM,

OF CRAIGEN-GILLAN,

IN ANSWER TO AN OBLIGING LETTER HE SENT IN THE COMMENCEMENT OF MY POETIC CAREER.[4]

Sir, o'er a gill I gat your card, — got
I trow it made me proud;
"See wha taks notice o' the bard!"
I lap and cried fu' loud. — leaped

Now deil-ma-care about their jaw,
The senseless, gawky million;
I'll cock my nose aboon them a', — above
I'm roos'd by Craigen-Gillan! — praised

'Twas noble, sir; 'twas like yoursel',
To grant your high protection:
A great man's smile ye ken fu' well,
Is aye a blest infection.

[1] A very old fashion of female head-dress.—*Burns's Glossary.*

[2] In 1785 Vincent Lunardi, the celebrated aeronaut, visited Scotland, and made several ascents in his balloon. In compliment to him the Scottish ladies wore what they called "Lunardi bonnets," to which Burns alludes in the above verse. They were made of gauze, or thin muslin, extended on wire, the upper part representing the balloon, and were for some time universally fashionable.

[3] With regard to this closing verse Motherwell has written:—"If poetical merit were to be determined by frequency of quotation, it would stand very high in the scale."

[4] Burns copied the above epistle into the Glenriddell collection, where he added the note that it was composed extempore in Nanse Tinnock's, Mauchline.—Craigen-Gillan is a large estate in Carrick, the southern district of Ayrshire. In what way Mr. M'Adam had noticed the poet we do not know.

Tho', by his banes wha in a tub — bones
Match'd Macedonian Sandy![1]
On my ain legs thro' dirt an' dub,
I independent stand aye.—

And when those legs to guid, warm kail, — soup
Wi' welcome canna bear me;
A lee dyke-side, a sybow-tail, — the shelter of a fence — young onion
And barley-scone shall cheer me. — barley-cake

Heaven spare you lang to kiss the breath
O' mony flow'ry simmers!
And bless your bonnie lasses baith, — both
I'm tald they're loosome kimmers! — winsome girls

And God bless young Dunaskin's[2] laird,
The blossom of our gentry!
And may he wear an auld man's beard,
A credit to his country.

INSCRIBED ON A WORK OF HANNAH MORE'S,

PRESENTED TO THE AUTHOR BY A LADY.[3]

Thou flatt'ring mark of friendship kind,
Still may thy pages call to mind
The dear, the beauteous donor;
Tho' sweetly female ev'ry part,
Yet such a head, and more—the heart
Does both the sexes honour:
She show'd her taste refined and just
When she selected thee;
Yet deviating, own I must,
For sae approving me;
But kind still, I'll mind still — remember
The *giver* in the gift;
I'll bless her, an' wiss her — wish
A Friend aboon the lift. — above — sky

[1] Diogenes of Sinope, the celebrated Cynic philosopher. The poet refers to his memorable interview with Alexander the Great (for which probably there is no historical basis). That monarch is said to have visited Diogenes at Corinth, and found him basking in the sun. Surprised at finding him apparently in such extreme poverty, Alexander, addressing him kindly, asked if he could do him any favour. "Yes," replied the philosopher, "stand a little out of my sunshine!"—"If I were not Alexander," remarked the conqueror as he turned slowly away, "I would wish to be Diogenes!"

[2] A place in Ayrshire, apparently belonging to Mr. M'Adam.

[3] Who this lady was has never been discovered. She was a certain Mrs. C., a friend of Robert Aiken's, in a letter to whom, dated 3d April, 1786, the poet transcribes the above lines.

THE HOLY FAIR.

There is some uncertainty about the date when this poem was written; some editors assign it to the year 1785. We assign it to the early part of 1786 on the following grounds:—On the 17th Feb. 1786, Burns wrote to his friend Richmond, in Edinburgh, to send him a copy of Fergusson's poems. A poem in that volume, "Leith Races," seems to have served Burns as a model, or suggestion, for his satire. The Edinburgh bard is accompanied to the gathering by a personage of the fair sex named Mirth, who meets him and introduces herself on a July morning quite in the same way as his Ayrshire brother is met and accompanied to the Holy Fair by Fun, and the measure of the present poem is the same as that of "Leith Races." The poem itself appeared in the Kilmarnock edition, published in July, 1786.

A robe of seeming truth and trust
Hid crafty Observation;
And secret hung, with poison'd crust,
The dirk of Defamation:
A mask that like the gorget show'd,
Dye-varying, on the pigeon;
And for a mantle large and broad,
He wrapt him in Religion.—Hypocrisy a-la-mode.

Upon a simmer Sunday morn,
When Nature's face is fair,
I walkèd forth to view the corn,
An' snuff the caller air. — fresh and cool
The rising sun owre Galston muirs,
Wi' glorious light was glintin'; — glancing
The hares were hirplin' down the furs, — limping furrows
The lav'rocks they were chantin' — larks
Fu' sweet that day.

As lightsomely I glowr'd abroad, — stared
To see a scene sae gay,
Three hizzies, early at the road, — young women
Cam' skelpin' up the way; — tripping
Twa had manteeles o' dolefu' black, — mantles
But ane wi' lyart lining; — gray
The third, that gaed a wee a-back, — walked a little behind
Was in the fashion shining
Fu' gay that day.

The twa appear'd like sisters twin,
In feature, form, an' claes; — clothes
Their visage, wither'd, lang, an' thin,
An' sour as ony slaes: — sloes
The third cam' up, hap-step-an'-lowp, — -jump
As light as ony lambie,
An' wi' a curchie low did stoop, — curtsey
As soon as e'er she saw me,
Fu' kind that day.

Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I, "Sweet lass,
I think ye seem to ken me; — know
I'm sure I've seen that bonnie face,
But yet I canna name ye."

Quo' she, an' laughin' as she spak,
An' taks me by the hauns, hands
"Ye, for my sake, hae gien the feck have given the larger portion
Of a' the ten commauns commandments
A screed some day. rent

"My name is Fun—your cronie dear,
The nearest friend ye hae;
An' this is Superstition here,
An' that's Hypocrisy.
I'm gaun to Mauchline Holy Fair,[1] going
To spend an hour in daffin': merriment
Gin ye'll go there, yon runkl'd pair, if wrinkled
We will get famous laughin'
At them this day."

Quoth I, "With a' my heart, I'll do't:
I'll get my Sunday's sark on, shirt
An' meet you on the holy spot;
Faith, we'se hae fine remarkin'!" we shall have
Then I gaed hame at crowdie-time, breakfast
An' soon I made me ready;
For roads were clad, frae side to side, from
Wi' monie a wearie body,
In droves that day.

Here, farmers gash, in ridin' graith, sagacious attire
Gaed hoddin' by their cotters; went jogging
There, swankies young, in braw braid-claith, strapping fellows
Are springin' owre the gutters.
The lasses, skelpin' barefit, thrang, tripping barefooted
In silks an' scarlets glitter;
Wi' sweet-milk cheese, in monie a whang, large slice
An' farls, bak'd wi' butter, cakes
Fu' crump that day. crisp

When by the plate we set our nose,
Weel heapèd up wi' ha'pence,
A greedy glowr Black Bonnet throws, stare
An' we maun draw our tippence. must
Then in we go to see the show,
On ev'ry side they're gath'rin',
Some carrying dails, some chairs an' stools, deal boards
An' some are busy bleth'rin' chattering
Right loud that day.

Here stands a shed to fend the showers,[2] keep off
An' screen our countra gentry,

[1] Holy Fair is a common phrase in the West of Scotland for a sacramental occasion.—R. B.

[2] The whole of the proceedings described take place out of doors, as explained below; hence the need for

"Here sits a raw o' tittlin' jauds."

—THE HOLY FAIR.

"Here sits a raw o' tittlin' jauds."

There, racer Jess[1] an' twa-three wh-res,
  Are blinkin' at the entry.
Here sits a raw of tittlin' jauds, row whispering jades
  Wi' heaving breast an' bare neck,
An' there a batch o' wabster lads, weaver
  Blackguardin' frae Kilmarnock, from
    For fun this day.

Here, some are thinkin' on their sins,
  An' some upo' their claes; clothes
Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins, soiled
  Anither sighs an' prays:
On this hand sits a chosen swatch, sample
  Wi' screw'd-up grace-proud faces;
On that, a set o' chaps at watch,
  Thrang winkin' on the lasses busy
    To chairs that day.

O happy is that man, an' blest!
  Nae wonder that it pride him!
Whase ain dear lass, that he likes best, whose own
  Comes clinkin' down beside him! plumping
Wi' arm repos'd on the chair back,
  He sweetly does compose him;
Which, by degrees, slips round her neck,
  An's loof upon her bosom, palm
    Unkenn'd that day. unnoticed

Now a' the congregation o'er,
  Is silent expectation;
For Moodie[2] speels the holy door, climbs up to
  Wi' tidings o' damnation.[3]
Should Hornie, as in ancient days, the devil
  'Mang sons o' God present him,
The vera sight o' Moodie's face,
  To's ain het hame had sent him own hot home
    Wi' fright that day.

the shed, and for the boards, chairs, and stools to sit on. The "plate" for the alms of the congregation would probably stand at the entrance of the churchyard with Black Bonnet (a familiar title for one holding the office of elder) in charge.

[1] Racer Jess had the honour of being related by immediate descent to the Poosie Nansie of the "Jolly Beggars." She was, in short, her daughter, and received her nickname from her pedestrian powers, having sometimes ran long races for wagers. She died at Mauchline in 1813.

[2] Moodie, minister of Riccarton, who figures also in the "Twa Herds" and the "Kirk's Alarm." See those pieces.

[3] "When the second edition of his poems was passing through the press Burns was favoured with many critical suggestions and amendments, to one of which only he attended. Blair reading over with him or hearing him recite, (which he delighted at all times in doing,) his 'Holy Fair,' stopped him at this line, which originally stood, 'wi' tidings o' salvation.' Nay, said the doctor, read 'damnation.' Burns improved the wit of the verse, undoubtedly, by adopting the emendation; but he gave another strange specimen of want of *tact*, when he insisted that Dr. Blair, one of the most scrupulous observers of clerical propriety, should permit him to acknowledge the obligation in a note."—J. G. LOCKHART.

Hear how he clears the points o' faith,
  Wi' rattlin' an' wi' thumpin'!
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
  He's stampin' an' he's jumpin'!
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,
  His eldritch squeel and gestures, unearthly
Oh how they fire the heart devout,
  Like cantharidian plasters,
    On sic a day! such

But, hark! the tent[1] has chang'd its voice;
  There's peace an' rest nae langer; no longer
For a' the real judges rise,
  They canna sit for anger.
Smith[2] opens out his cauld harangues, cold
  On practice and on morals,
An' aff the godly pour in thrangs, throngs
  To gie the jars an' barrels
    A lift that day.

What signifies his barren shine
  Of moral powers and reason?
His English style, an' gesture fine,
  Are a' clean out o' season.
Like Socrates or Antonine,
  Or some auld pagan heathen,
The moral man he does define,
  But ne'er a word o' faith in
    That's right that day.

In guid time comes an antidote
  Against sic poison'd nostrum; such
For Peebles,[3] frae the Water-fit, river-mouth
  Ascends the holy rostrum:
See, up he's got the word o' God,
  An' meek an' mim has view'd it, primly

[1] What the "tent" here means requires to be explained. Dr. Jamieson in his *Scottish Dictionary* defines it as "a square pulpit of wood, erected in the fields [in this case it would no doubt be in the churchyard], and supported by four posts, which rest on the ground, rising three or four feet from it, with a trap leading up to the door ['the holy door'] and a projection in front, which is meant to protect the speaker from the sun and rain, as well as to serve as a sounding-board." "*Tent-preaching*," he adds, "has been long in use in Scotland, occasionally, at least, from the year 1630. . . . It became customary in consequence of the multitudes who assembled from different, and often remote, places to attend the dispensation of the supper, all of whom it was impossible to accommodate within doors. . . . The practice is now, indeed, almost entirely disused about cities and towns [he is writing about the year 1825]; but it is still retained in many country parishes on the Lord's day at least, where no church would suffice to accommodate all who attend divine service." It will be observed that Burns does not touch upon the actual dispensation of the sacrament, which would no doubt take place in the church itself, the people going in in successive batches.

[2] George Smith, minister of Galston, who figures in the "Kirk's Alarm," by the name of Irvine-side. Burns, it is said, here meant to be complimentary to Smith as a preacher of good sense, but Smith, it seems, resented the compliment, and hence he is spoken of in a different style in the "Kirk's Alarm."—The "real judges" did not approve of Smith's style of preaching, and rose and went off for the purpose of refreshing themselves with the contents of the jars and barrels.

[3] Peebles, minister of Newton-upon-Ayr, noticed in the "Twa Herds."

While Common-Sense[1] has ta'en the road,
An' aff, an' up the Cowgate,[2]
Fast, fast, that day.

Wee Miller,[3] niest, the guard relieves, — next
An' orthodoxy raibles, — rattles nonsensically
Tho' in his heart he weel believes,
An' thinks it auld wives' fables:
But, faith! the birkie wants a manse, — young fellow
So, cannily he hums them;
Altho' his carnal wit an' sense
Like hafflins-ways o'ercomes him — half-way
At times that day.

Now butt an' ben, the change-house fills, — in kitchen and parlour · inn
Wi' yill-caup commentators; — ale-bowl
Here's crying out for bakes and gills, — biscuits
An' there the pint stowp clatters;
While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang, — busy
Wi' logic an' wi' scripture,
They raise a din, that in the end,
Is like to breed a rupture
O' wrath that day.[4]

Leeze me on drink![5] it gies us mair — drink's the thing!
Than either school or college:
It kindles wit, it waukens lair, — wakens learning
It pangs us fu' o' knowledge. — crams
Be't whisky gill, or penny wheep, — small beer
Or ony stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinking deep,
To kittle up our notion — to sharpen our perceptions
By night or day.

The lads an' lasses, blythely bent
To mind baith saul an' body, — both soul

[1] Some commentators suppose that there is here a local allusion to Dr. Mackenzie, then of Mauchline, who had conducted a controversy under the pseudonym of Common Sense. But the poet seems rather to intend a personification of the class of doctrines then known by this title, also called the New Light doctrines. See notes to the "Ordination," p. 136.

[2] A street so called, which faces the tent in Mauchline.—R. B.

[3] The Rev. Mr. Miller, afterwards minister of Kilmaurs.

[4] "The devotion of the common people on the usual days of worship is as much to be commended as their conduct at the sacrament is to be censured. It is celebrated but once in a year, when there are in some places three thousand communicants, and as many idle spectators. Of the first, as many as possible crowd each side of a long table, and the elements are rudely shoven from one to another, and in some places, before the day is at an end, fights and other indecencies ensue. It is often made a season of debauchery."—PENNANT'S *Tour in Scotland*, 1769.

Robert Chambers quotes from a pamphlet published in the year of the poet's birth, under the title of *A Letter from a Blacksmith to the Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland*, describing "a sacramental occasion" in Scotland as accompanied by exactly such scenes as are described in the "Holy Fair." Burns may have seen this pamphlet, and his satiric exposure, doubtless, did much to put a stop to the abuses.

[5] *Leeze me on*, a phrase of congratulatory endearment.—R. B.——"Leeze me on drink," I am happy in drink; pleased am I with drink; or proud I am of drink.

Sit round the table, weel content,
An' steer about the toddy. stir
On this ane's dress, an' that ane's leuk, look
They're making observations;
While some are cozie i' the neuk, snug corner
An' formin' assignations
To meet some day.

But now the L—d's ain trumpet touts, own
Till a' the hills are rairin', roaring
An' echoes back return the shouts:
Black Russell[1] is na sparin':
His piercing words, like Highlan' swords,
Divide the joints an' marrow;
His talk o' hell, whare devils dwell,
Our vera sauls does harrow[2] very souls
Wi' fright that day.

A vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit,
Fill'd fu' o' lowin' brunstane, burning brimstone
Whase ragin' flame, an' scorchin' heat,
Wad melt the hardest whun-stane! whinstone
The half asleep start up wi' fear,
An' think they hear it roarin',
When presently it does appear,
'Twas but some neebor snorin' neighbour
Asleep that day.

'Twad be owre lang a tale, to tell
How monie stories past,
An' how they crowded to the yill ale
When they were a' dismist;
How drink gaed round, in cogs an' caups, small tubs and wooden bowls
Amang the furms an' benches; forms

[1] The Rev. John Russell, of Kilmarnock, afterwards of Stirling. He was at one time a schoolmaster in Cromarty, and Hugh Miller thus speaks of him: "Some traits of Russell have been preserved. Burns seems to have seized with the felicity of genius the distinctive features of his character. He was a large, robust, dark-complexioned man, imperturbably grave, fierce of temper, and had a stern expression of countenance. . . . He became popular as a preacher: his manner was strong and energetic: the severity of his temper was a sort of genius to him, while he described, as he loved to do, the tortures of the wicked in a future state. . . . A native of Cromarty, who happened at that time to be in the west of Scotland, walked to Mauchline to hear his old schoolmaster preach;—this was about 1792. There was an excellent sermon to be heard from the tent, and excellent drink to be had from a neighbouring ale-house, and between the two, the people seemed much divided. A young clergyman was preaching, and Russell was nigh him. At every fresh movement of the people, or ungodly burst of sound from the ale-house, the latter would raise himself on tip-toe—look sternly towards the change-house, and then at his younger brother in the pulpit: at last his own turn to preach arrived—he sprang into the tent—closed his Bible—and without psalm or prayer or other preliminary matter, burst out at once in a passionate and eloquent address upon the folly and sin which a portion of the people were committing. The sound in the ale-house ceased—the inmates came out and listened to the denunciation, which some of them remembered with a shudder in after-life. He lived to a great age, and was always a dauntless and intrepid old man."

[2] Shakespeare's Hamlet.—R. B.

The poet perhaps had in mind the lines—

Looks it not like the King? mark it, Horatio.
——Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder.

An' cheese an' bread, frae women's laps,
Was dealt about in lunches,
An' dawds that day — large pieces

In comes a gaucie gash guidwife, — jolly sagacious matron
An' sits down by the fire,
Syne draws her kebbuck an' her knife; — then cheese
The lasses they are shyer.
The auld guidmen about the grace, — elderly married men
Frae side to side they bother,
Till some ane by his bonnet lays,
An' gies them't like a tether,
Fu' lang that day.[1]

Waesucks! for him that gets nae lass. — alas!
Or lasses that hae naething!
Sma' need has he to say a grace,
Or melvie his braw claithing! — soil with meal
O wives! be mindfu', ance yoursel'
How bonnie lads ye wanted,
An' dinna, for a kebbuck-heel, — remainder piece of a cheese
Let lasses be affronted
On sic a day. — such

Now Clinkumbell, wi' rattlin' tow, — the bell-ringer — rope
Begins to jow an' croon; — peal
Some swagger hame the best they dow, — can
Some wait the afternoon.
At slaps the billies halt a blink, — gaps — young fellows — moment
Till lasses strip their shoon:[2] — shoes
Wi' faith an' hope, an' love an' drink,
They're a' in famous tune,
For crack that day. — chat

How monie hearts this day converts
O' sinners and o' lasses!
Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane — by night
As saft as ony flesh is.
There's some are fu' o' love divine;
There's some are fu' o' brandy;
An' monie jobs that day begin,
May end in houghmagandie
Some ither day.[3]

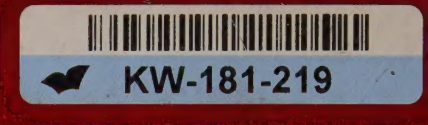
[1] "The farcical scene the poet here describes was often a favourite field for his observation, and the most of the incidents he mentions had actually passed before his eyes."—GILBERT BURNS.

[2] Formerly, perhaps in some places even yet, it was common for the "lasses" to walk barefooted ("skelpin' barefit") most of the way to and from church, their shoes being put on and off not far from the building.

[3] "The annual celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the rural parishes of Scotland has much in it of those old popish festivals in which superstition, traffic, and amusement are to be found so strangely intermingled. Burns saw and seized in it one of the happiest of all subjects to afford scope for the display of that strong and piercing sagacity by which he could almost intuitively distinguish the

reasonable from the absurd, and the becoming from the ridiculous;—of that picturesque power of fancy which enabled him to represent scenes and persons, and groups and looks, attitude and gesture, in a manner almost as lively and impressive, even in words, as if all the artifices and energies of the pencil had been employed;—of that knowledge which he had necessarily acquired of the manners, passions, and prejudices of the rustics around him;—of whatever was ridiculous, no less than whatever was effectually beautiful, in rural life."—ROBERT HERON.

"Encouraged by the roar of applause which greeted these pieces [the 'Twa Herds,' 'Holy Willie's Prayer,' &c.], thus orally promulgated and recommended, he produced in succession various satires, wherein the same set of persons were lashed: as the 'Ordination,' the 'Kirk's Alarm,' &c,, and last and best undoubtedly, the 'Holy Fair,' in which, unlike the others that have been mentioned, satire keeps its own place and is subservient to the poetry of Burns. This was indeed an extraordinary performance: no partisan of any sect could whisper that malice had formed its principal inspiration, or that its chief attraction lay in the boldness with which individuals, entitled and accustomed to respect, were held up to ridicule: it was acknowledged, amidst the sternest mutterings of wrath, that national manners were once more in the hands of a national poet, and hardly denied by those who shook their heads over the indiscretions of particular passages, or even by those who justly regretted a too prevailing tone of levity in the treatment of a subject essentially solemn, that the muse of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green' had awakened after the slumber of ages, with all the vigour of her regal youth about her, in 'the auld clay biggin' of Mossgiel."—J. G. LOCKHART.——Mr. Lockhart remarks also that it "will ever continue to move wonder and regret" that the same man should have written this poem and the "Cotter's Saturday Night." In regard to this Prof. Wilson says: "Of the 'Holy Fair' few have spoken with any very serious reprehension. Dr. Blair was so much taken with it that he suggested a well-known emendation [see note 3, p. 163]—and for our own part we have no hesitation in saying that we see no reason to lament that it should be written by the writer of the 'Cotter's Saturday Night.'"——The professor's opinion will undoubtedly find more supporters than Mr. Lockhart's.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